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Weaving two worlds: A Moroccan Narrative of Adaptation in Prague

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Supervised by Mgr. Karel Černý, Ph.D.

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## Statement

I hereby declare that I have written this diploma thesis solely by myself and I agree with its eventual publication in print or electronic form. All sources and literature have been properly cited. This work has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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## **Abstract:**

Immigration or relocation offers a valuable opportunity to explore the impact of a new environment on the cultural repertoire or identity of a specific group. This qualitative study delves into the adaptation experiences of 17 Moroccan nationals residing in Prague. The focus is placed on their adept navigation of cultural differences, the strategies employed to overcome challenges during the adaptation process, and the revelation of the pivotal role played by social networks and support systems in their transition to Prague life. A carefully designed semi-structured interview protocol was used to gather detailed data. The data analysis followed the principles of constructive grounded theory methodology, aiming to develop a deep understanding and identify patterns in the collected information. Through systematic coding and continuous comparison, several significant themes emerged from the data: Cultural Dichotomy: Navigating Two Worlds (a); Bonds of Belonging: Building Bridges with Fellow Moroccans (b); Chasing Integration: Struggles and Strategies in Prague (c), Unveiling Identities: Negotiating Individuality in a Foreign Land (d).

## **Introduction:**

The topic of migration, a term that broadly covers the processes of relocation and immigration, with its inherent challenges and transformative journeys, has long been an area of significant scholarly attention, particularly in the realm of social behavior. A subset of this interest has focused on the experiences of Moroccan nationals, whose rich cultural heritage and unique perspectives on adaptation often provide compelling narratives. However, while there

exists an abundance of literature examining the Moroccan diaspora in more typical relocation destinations such as France or the Netherlands, few if any studies have delved into the experiences of Moroccan nationals within the context of Prague. This study seeks to fill this gap, focusing on the cultural exchange between inherent Moroccan frameworks and the Czech culture, thereby offering a novel and enriching narrative around the complexities of acculturation and identity evolution.

Acculturation, a key concept at the heart of the relocation experience, is a complex process that unfolds when individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds come into continuous first-hand contact. This interaction can trigger changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both groups (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, 1936). This early classic formulation was later expanded to characterize acculturation as a cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. It portrays the dynamics of acculturation as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors (Social Science Research Council, 1954). On the other hand, certain perspectives underscore a 'monistic' view, positing that changes predominantly occur within the immigrants, who adopt traits from the host culture (Marden & Meyer, 1968).

In this study, the exploration of Moroccan nationals' experiences while adapting to life in Prague is intrinsically linked to these understandings of acculturation. Through the examination of adaptive strategies, challenges faced, and decisions made regarding the preservation or transformation of cultural identities, the research inherently encapsulates the process of acculturation. Yet, while these narratives give insight into the dynamic interplay between maintaining one's cultural identity and adopting new cultural elements--a central process in

acculturation--it's important to note that I consciously chose the term "adaptation" for its breadth and neutrality.

Although I anticipated the occurrence of acculturation to be likely within the participants' experiences, I opted to utilize "adaptation" to remain open to all possibilities, including those not conforming strictly to acculturation. This choice fostered a more nuanced understanding of the participants' experiences as they navigated their new cultural surroundings in Prague. By allowing for variations in individual experiences and strategies, the aim was to ensure that preconceived ideas did not unduly influence the interpretation of the data, thereby allowing for the narratives to authentically reflect the participants' lived experiences.

It's important to recognize the critical role that the setting plays in the process of acculturation. The environment, after all, can profoundly influence the strategies adopted in acculturation and the nature of intercultural interactions. This makes the backdrop - in this case, Prague - a significant component in understanding the unique experiences and acculturation pathways of Moroccan nationals. Prague, the central setting of this study, is a bustling capital in the heart of Europe. This city, known for its rich history and vibrant commerce, draws people from all around the world, making it a true multicultural hotspot. For Moroccan nationals involved in our study, Prague represents more than just a new cultural environment, it also introduces a whole new physical landscape. As a blend of different cultures, languages, and traditions, Prague provides a lively backdrop for the adaptation stories of our Moroccan participants. Its diverse architectural styles, which span from Gothic to Cubist and Contemporary, mark a significant departure from the familiar Moroccan sceneries. This difference adds another layer to their adaptation journey, as they have to adjust not only to a new culture but also to a new physical environment. In this respect, the participants find themselves

not only adapting to a new cultural and social setting but also navigating a city that looks and feels different from their homeland. Prague's unique character as a historic, commercial, and international hub offers both opportunities and challenges. It's within this unique setting that the experiences and adaptation processes of the Moroccan participants unfold.

In the expansive field of immigration and acculturation studies, this research occupies a unique niche. In order to effectively investigate the lived experiences of the participants during their adjustment period in Prague I placed special emphasis on identifying the potential challenges these individuals encounter and exploring the strategies they employ to surmount such obstacles. This combination of recognizing difficulties and implementing strategies for overcoming them is what I refer to as the process of adaptation throughout this study. First, I aimed to identify the key challenges that Moroccans faced when they first arrived in Prague, looking at the obstacles they might have encountered in their new environment. I then turned my attention to the strategies they used to handle these obstacles. I was specifically interested in understanding how they dealt with cultural differences and the approaches they took to overcome the barriers they faced. Following that, I investigated whether, and to what extent, Moroccans chose to preserve their cultural identity while residing in Prague. This exploration was designed to account for the diversity in individual choices and the spectrum of cultural assimilation that they might exhibit. I was curious about how they handled the differences between their own culture and the Czech culture, and the ways they stayed connected to their heritage. Finally, I looked into the role that social networks and support systems played in this adaptation process. I aimed to find out how important these systems were for Moroccans as they adjusted to life in Prague. I was convinced that this comprehensive approach, covering challenges, coping strategies, cultural identity negotiation, and the importance of social networks, provided the most



effective pathway to encapsulate the multifaceted narrative of the Moroccan adaptation journey in Prague

In the process of conducting this study, the literature review was intentionally deferred until after data collection and preliminary analysis to minimize the influence of preconceived notions on the study's findings. The literature review thus presents a concise overview, drawing on some of the most pertinent work in the areas of acculturation and culture shock. It juxtaposes varying viewpoints and examines more focused studies that explore the experiences of Moroccans in European countries. This approach allowed for an unbiased analysis and interpretation of the data, with the goal of capturing a fresh and authentic understanding of the Moroccan experience in Prague. The delayed literature review thus serves not only as a validation of the study's results but also as a platform for situating these results within the broader context of existing scholarly discourse.

Methodologically, this research utilizes a constructivist grounded theory approach, as outlined by Charmaz in her seminal work "Constructing Grounded Theory". Anchored in participant narratives, the research embarks on an analytical journey unburdened by preconceived notions, allowing the data to shape my understanding of the Moroccan experience in Prague's vibrant, diverse setting. The data description chapter constructs a vivid tapestry of participant profiles, animating each individual's unique experiences. These narratives encapsulate their trials and triumphs, the pursuit of belonging, and the ongoing balance of preserving cultural heritage whilst integrating into a new cultural context. Finally, the discussion and analysis chapter dissects the complexities of their integration process. Thematic codes emerge from the narrative array, highlighting challenges, coping strategies, and the essential role of social

networks and support systems in adaptation. In this analytical realm, the Moroccan narrative resounds, reflecting resilience, transformation, and the indomitable human spirit.

This study is not just an academic endeavour; it is an invitation to engage with the lived experiences of Moroccan nationals residing in Prague. It transcends statistical analyses and theoretical discussions, instead offering a deep dive into the complex dynamics of cultural adaptation and integration. The focus here is on the stories of individuals, their trials, triumphs, and the strategies they employ as they navigate a new cultural landscape.

## Chapter One: Literature Review

The process of adapting to a new cultural environment often triggers anxiety due to the loss of familiar signs and symbols that shape our social interactions. These cues, encompassing various aspects such as words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, and norms, play a crucial role in our daily lives and are acquired throughout our upbringing. They hold equal importance to the language we speak and the values we embrace. However, when individuals choose to emigrate or relocate to a different country or continent, they find themselves in an unfamiliar culture where many of these cues are absent. Consequently, this experience is commonly accompanied by feelings of frustration and anxiety. The intensity of these emotions is influenced by individuals' open-mindedness and willingness to embrace new experiences. However, as humans, our initial instinct often leads us to reject the environment causing discomfort (Oberg, 1960).

Dr. Kalervo Oberg suggests that when foreigners gather to express complaints about their host country and its people, it is a clear indication that they are experiencing culture shock. He is widely recognized for his seminal work on the nature of culture shock and its relationship to the

individual. Particularly in his 1960 article "Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments" where Oberg identified four stages commonly associated with the phenomenon. These stages though not universally experienced in the same way by everyone, provide a valuable framework for comprehending the emotional journey of individuals as they navigate the challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment.

In the initial weeks of the arrival, most individuals are captivated by the novelty of their new surroundings. They often stay in foreign-friendly spaces and interact with locals who speak their language and display kindness and hospitality towards foreigners. This phase of excitement and positivity, known as the honeymoon stage, can last for a few days, weeks, or even up to six months, depending on the specific circumstances. During this phase, individuals may have a positive outlook and be eager to explore and learn about the host culture (Oberg, 1960). However, this initial enthusiasm gradually gives way to the second stage, known as the frustration phase.

The second stage is characterized by a hostile and aggressive attitude towards the host country. This hostility arises from the genuine difficulties encountered during the process of adjustment. Challenges related to domestic help, schooling, language, housing, transportation, and shopping contribute to the feeling of being out of place. Moreover, while generally helpful, the host country's people may seem indifferent to these troubles, leading to a perception of insensitivity and a lack of sympathy. Consequently, a negative sentiment emerges, accompanied by a tendency to form alliances with fellow countrymen and engage in criticism of the host country, its customs, and its people. However, this criticism is often biased and derogatory, lacking an objective assessment of the actual conditions and historical circumstances that have shaped them. Oberg (1960) affirms that It becomes tempting to seek solace within expatriate

communities and closed social circles, which can foster emotionally charged stereotypes that portray the host country and its people in a negative light. He states that “culture shock is in a sense a crisis in the disease. If you overcome it, you stay; if not, you leave before you reach the stage of a nervous breakdown” (Oberg, 1960, p. 179).

Alternatively, If the visitor manages to acquire some language skills and becomes more independent in navigating the new cultural environment, they begin to make progress. Despite still facing obstacles, they adopt an attitude of accepting these difficulties as part of the experience (Oberg, 1960).

In the fourth stage, the visitor's adjustment is nearly complete. They have reached a point where they accept the customs of the host country as merely another way of life. Operating within the new cultural environment no longer evokes anxiety, although occasional moments of strain may still arise. It is only when the individual has a thorough understanding of all the social cues that the remaining strain completely dissipates. With a complete adjustment, not only do they accept the local foods, drinks, habits, and customs, but they also begin to genuinely enjoy them. During home visits, they may even bring certain aspects of the host country back with them. If the visitor eventually leaves the host country for good, they often experience a sense of longing and nostalgia for the place and the people they have grown accustomed to (Oberg, 1960).

As individuals progress further, they enter the final stage of culture shock known as the adaptation phase. In this stage, individuals develop a sense of belonging, form meaningful connections within the host culture, and feel more comfortable and integrated. They have successfully adjusted to the new cultural environment and may even embrace aspects of the host culture as part of their identity (Oberg, 1960).

Culture shock and its stages are part of the acculturation process and while Oberg's work provides valuable insights into the stages of culture shock it is important to explore broader concepts that relate to the process through which individuals adapt to and integrate into a new cultural environment. Scholars and researchers in different disciplines have developed several theories of acculturation. Notable contemporary research in the field focuses on the development of different strategies, how acculturation affects individuals, and the interventions aimed at facilitating the process. According to Berry (1997), this understanding enables researchers and practitioners to gain insight into social dynamics, cultural change, and intercultural interactions. This gathered knowledge is then used to inform effective support systems, community engagement strategies, and evidence-based interventions that facilitate successful integration and foster inclusive societies.

In the field of international migration studies, attempts to understand acculturation have resulted in various theories, models, and classification systems. One significant contribution to this field is the work of John W. Berry, an established acculturation theorist whose research on acculturation and adaptation has provided valuable insights into the experiences of migrants and the factors that shape their successful integration into host societies. Berry is interested in the changes that occur when individuals that have developed in one cultural context attempt to live in a new context that results from migration. Considering that culture is a powerful shaper of behavior, he investigates if individuals continue to act in a new setting as they did in the previous one, or if they change their behavioral repertoire to be more appropriate in the new setting, his goal is to uncover an existing pattern of continuity and change in how people go about their lives in a new society.

According to Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936), acculturation encompasses the cultural and behavioral changes that occur when individuals from different cultures come into continuous, direct contact with a new culture. The key aspect here is that the cultural patterns of either or both groups may change as a result of this contact (p. 149). This definition is broad, encompassing changes not only in superficial cultural traits like clothing or food preferences but also in more profound aspects of culture like values or beliefs. This definition has served as a foundation for subsequent work on acculturation, including John W. Berry's (1992) model of acculturation strategies. In a recent interview, Berry provided a nuanced perspective on acculturation. He emphasized that this process is not merely a consequence of direct contact between cultures, but it's also significantly shaped by wider societal dynamics such as power relations, discrimination, and policy environments. While the foundational definition of acculturation remains pertinent, it has been progressively refined and expanded. It is now understood that acculturation can transpire even in the absence of direct, continuous interaction, largely facilitated by global and local communication technologies, including television. Additionally, the complexity of acculturation has escalated in our rapidly diversifying societies, where the process isn't confined to just two cultural groups but involves multiple cultural groups interacting simultaneously (Berry, 2018).

After understanding the concept of acculturation, it's indeed important to discuss the strategies or approaches individuals or groups may adopt during this process. As proposed by Berry (1980) The concept of acculturation strategies refers to the various ways that groups and individuals seek to engage in the acculturation process. Knowledge of these variations has increased substantially in recent years, challenging the widespread assumption that everyone would assimilate and become absorbed into the dominant group. John W. Berry's (1992) model

of acculturation is a widely used framework to understand how individuals, who migrate from one culture to another, adapt to a new cultural context. This model presented a four-level typology of the different kinds of acculturation: Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalization. These varieties emerge based on two independent dimensions: maintenance of heritage culture and identity (whether individuals wish to maintain their original cultural practices), and contact and participation in the larger society (whether individuals are interested in engaging with the new culture).

(a) Assimilation occurs when individuals do not wish to maintain their heritage culture and prefer to adopt the practices of the new culture. Essentially, they relinquish their original cultural identity in favor of the host culture. An example could be a migrant who, upon moving to a new country, entirely adapts to the customs, traditions, and language of the new culture, ignoring their own.

(b) Separation, on the other hand, is the opposite of assimilation. Individuals who opt for this strategy wish to maintain their original cultural practices and do not want to adopt the dominant culture. For instance, immigrants might choose to only socialize within their own ethnic community, maintaining their native language, customs, and traditions, while avoiding interaction with the larger society.

(c) Integration, also referred to as biculturalism, is a balanced approach where individuals express an interest to maintain strong ties with their ethnic group and engage with the dominant culture. For example, a person might maintain their own traditions at home (like speaking their native language or following their traditional customs) while also adopting practices of the new culture in public life, such as learning the local language and participating in local customs and traditions.

(d) Lastly, Marginalization or deculturation is when individuals neither maintain their heritage culture nor engage with the new one. individuals “lose cultural and psychological contact with both their traditional culture and the larger society” (Berry, 1998, p. 119). This strategy can often result from exclusion, discrimination, or other factors that alienate individuals from both cultures. An example could be a refugee who, due to traumatic experiences or exclusion, feels disconnected from their original culture, but also faces discrimination and lack of acceptance in the new society.

The most beneficial acculturation strategy for immigrants seems to be integration, as it has been consistently linked with more positive results compared to the other three strategies (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 318), while marginalization tends to have the least favorable outcome. acculturation research supports that while integration can be beneficial, it is important to note that individual experiences can vary widely. Factors such as personal circumstances, context, and the specifics of both the culture of origin and the host culture can influence the effectiveness and outcome of different acculturation strategies.

Although Berry’s acculturation model has received research support, it has also been subject to a fair share of criticism. In Deculturation: its lack of validity Del Pilar and Udasco critically examine Berry’s (1980) concept of deculturation. They discuss the problems that weakened the validity of the deculturation idea and address the appropriateness of classifying some members of the nondominant groups with a label that suggests they are cultureless. Del Pilar and Udasco (2004) state that “The lack of clarity about deculturation as a group or individual variable is a consequence of its grounding in the ecocultural theory, which takes a global and interactive view of acculturation. This global approach does not clearly differentiate between group and individual deculturation. The resultant confounding of group and individual



data makes it impossible to sort out how the criteria used to determine group deculturation are related to the criteria used to establish individual deculturation, significantly compromising the notion's validity" (p. 171).

Deculturation results when members of nondominant cultures become alienated from the dominant culture as well as from their own minority society. In this way, people lose cultural identification on two fronts (Berry & Sam, 1997). Berry's definition of the concept of deculturation has been associated with increased stress and a significant risk of psychopathology for those classified as deculturated. When this definition is applied to groups rather than individuals, Del Pilar and Udasco (2004) underline that "the description of such groups as psychopathological is in conflict with modern psychiatry that holds that all psychopathology resides in "individuals" and that a mental disorder cannot be applied to a group" (p. 171).

Del Pilar & Udasco (2004) further criticize the concept's assumptions about the complete loss of culture and the potential negative emotional impact of the hypothesis. The concept of deculturation is based on a concrete view of culture in which the loss of ethnic traits by an individual is thought to represent a literal loss. The concept under discussion views cultural members as though their ethnic characteristics were stored in a box, and once emptied, the individual is left without the markers that indicate their cultural affiliation. According to the idea of deculturation, such individuals from minority groups, stripped of their cultural identity, are perceived as conflicted and alienated, living in some marginal space within society. Given that the validity of deculturation hasn't been proven, the negative emotional toll this theory imposes on the people affected by it is substantial.

Moreover, seen through the lens of social power dynamics, labeling someone as deculturated could serve as a precursor to implementing policies aimed at isolation in various

forms. Therefore, terms like deculturation, marginality, and others such as underclass, have been scrutinized for their potential adverse effects on the individuals they claim to represent (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004).

While there are suggestions that the concept of deculturation has its shortcomings (as indicated by Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997; Ryder et al., 2000; Schmitz, 2001), research employing this concept regularly surfaces in social science literature. It seems that the concept has gained momentum of its own. In these studies, members of non-dominant cultures who show weak identification with their ethnic group or exhibit stress or resentment towards the majority culture are often labeled as deculturated. The appeal of the deculturation concept for researchers seems to stem from its perceived potential to succinctly encapsulate many factors influencing acculturating immigrants. However, these expectations have proven to be unfulfilled. Deculturation is instead interpreted in a relative and individualistic manner, with no single, clear definition of the concept, rendering the concept irrelevant (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004).

Del Pilar and Udasco (2004) argue that irrespective of the circumstances, individuals labeled as deculturated aren't devoid of culture. Labeling them as such appears to have limited utility, and instead seems to unfairly burden them with the negative connotations associated with the term 'deculturation'. They echo Lonner and Adamopoulos's (1997) insightful warning: deculturation should be treated as a working hypothesis, not an accepted conclusion.

In my attempt to consider more recent critiques that highlight the potential limitations of Berry's model of acculturation. A critical perspective worth mentioning is provided by Bhatia and Ram (2009) in their work "Theorizing Identity in Transnational and Diaspora Cultures: A Critical Approach to Acculturation". The authors examine the various ways in which the concept of diaspora has important implications for rethinking traditional notions of acculturation. They

argue for a more nuanced understanding of acculturation that takes into account the complexities of transnational migration and global movements, as well as the influence of societal context and power dynamics. Their work provides a counterargument to models of acculturation that state that all immigrants experience a universal psychological process of acculturation and adaptation.

Berry's acculturation model and the broad body of research associated with his work developed universal, linear models and theories of immigration identity, acculturation, and adaptation. While commendable for shedding light on issues of immigrant identity, it has largely presented migration as a fixed series of phases and stages that fails to consider the specific culturally distinct and politically entrenched experiences of newer, non-European, transnational immigrants (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). Despite acknowledging the substantial variations in the living conditions of diverse cultural groups experiencing acculturation, Berry and his associates uphold the principle of universality, asserting that the psychological processes at play during acculturation remain essentially identical across all groups.

In opposition to this model of acculturation, the emergence of the notion of diaspora and a distinct area of research called "diaspora studies" has become widely used to understand immigrant experiences. The notion of diaspora represents immigrant communities who unmistakably attempt to maintain real and/or imagined connections and commitment to their country of origin, they identify themselves and operate as a unified group (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). According to Bhatia and Ram (2009), diasporas usually form when they feel that their culture is underrepresented in the prevailing majority society, this leads to them experiencing the suppression and silencing of their own culture. It is undeniable that the creation of diasporas has serious political implications, diasporic communities from non-European non-white backgrounds highlight the constant balancing act between various dualities, here and there, past and present,

homeland and host country, and self and others. These ongoing negotiations have often been overlooked or insufficiently understood in many acculturation models and existing psychological research on immigrant experiences (Bhatia and Ram, 2009).

To understand the concept of diaspora and the diasporic condition we first must place any ideas linked to acculturation or the formation of immigrant identity within a historical context, tied to a series of political stances, and grounded in negotiation, displacement, and conflict. Instead of proceeding with the presumption of a fixed, stable, and unified cultural identity that undergoes various acculturation paths, (Bhatia and Ram, 2009) advocate for a more dynamic and politically informed comprehension of migrant identity. This perspective incorporates the wider sociological context that generates the material and structural conditions that influence both the acculturation process and migrant identity and is receptive to ongoing engagement and negotiation. The authors (2009) argue that with the increasingly prominent presence of diasporas in both discourse and reality, we cannot continue to perceive elements such as culture, race, and gender as restricted to national borders or confined in rigid binary conceptions. Hence the importance of diaspora studies and their role in examining how self and identity are shaped by colonial histories, contemporary transnational migration, and diaspora formation, which significantly enhances our understanding of acculturation and immigrant identities.

While integration and biocultural competency may be desirable goals worth pursuing, the experiences of immigrants living in the modern diaspora suggest the process is a constant, dynamic, and sometimes unstable entanglement with multiple cultures. The notion of permanent integration is not always realistic or sustainable, as individuals may achieve it temporarily only to lose it again. Thus proving that the acculturation process isn't a predetermined path with a set endpoint but instead requires ongoing negotiation. As a result, there are several conceptual issues

with portraying the strategy of integration as the final developmental goal in an immigrant's acculturation journey (Bhatia and Ram, 2009).

As a concluding note to their critique of Berry's model, Bhatia and Ram (2009) raise important questions about the concept of integration. First, they highlight that while Berry and colleagues suggest integration as the ultimate goal of an immigrant's acculturation, they fail to detail the process through which such an objective could be achieved. Second, their model overlooks how factors such as conflict, power, and asymmetry can influence the acculturation process for many diasporic immigrants. For instance, Berry's discussion of integration implicitly assumes an equal status and power between the majority and minority cultures. Further, the authors question the clarity of the term 'integration' itself. How can one gauge if an individual has integrated successfully with the host culture? Who determines whether an immigrant is pursuing a strategy of marginalization, integration, or separation? These questions remain largely unanswered in Berry's acculturation model.

As I transition from discussing diaspora and diaspora studies, it is important to underline the relevance of transnational studies in this discourse. Transnational migration studies have emerged as an inherently interdisciplinary field that provides another crucial perspective for understanding the experiences of immigrants. Most scholars within the field recognize that contemporary migrants and their predecessors maintain various kinds of ties to their homelands at the same time that they are incorporated into the countries that receive them (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). These studies delve into the complexities of modern migration patterns and identities, further broadening our understanding of acculturation beyond existing models.

The emergence of a transnational optic is characterized by scholars acknowledging that many contemporary migrants maintained a variety of ties to their home countries while they

become incorporated into the countries where they settled. Migration has always been a multifaceted process. It is not merely about blending into a 'melting pot' or becoming a part of a 'multicultural salad bowl'. Instead, it involves migrants becoming, to different extents, intertwined within multiple locations and layers of the transnational social fields they inhabit. Meaning that despite the clear boundaries of nation-states holding political and cultural significance, it's becoming increasingly evident that numerous aspects of social life transcend these borders (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

For a robust and comprehensive introduction to the topic of transnationalism and migration "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends" (2007) serves as an invaluable resource. This seminal piece provides a thorough overview of the history and ongoing evolution of scholarly efforts using a transnational optic to understand migration, setting a clear trajectory for future research. It offers deep insights into the intricate dynamics of migration, deftly untangling the complexities of this global phenomenon.

The authors report on the findings of the transnational migration scholarships (Basch et al. 1994, Faist 2000a,b, Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Grasmuck & Pessar 1991, Guarnizo 1997, Itzigsohn et al. 1999, Jacoby 2004, Kivisto 2001, Kyle 2000, Levitt 2001, Mahler 1998, Portes et al. 1999, Smith & Guarnizo 1998). Stating that during the 1990s, transnational migration researchers added a new perspective to the conversation of migration assimilation and integration, arguing that some migrants continue to be active in their homelands at the same time as they become part of the countries that received them, these migrants and their descendants participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political, cultural, processes that transcend borders while they become part of the majority society where they settled. While the early iterations of this perspective were indeed groundbreaking, they also had the typical shortcomings

associated with innovative approaches. These scholars had the tendency to identify transnational migration in every scenario, disregarding the fact that migrants' transnational activity greatly differs in extent and reach. Earlier research findings were overly optimistic, suggesting that by adopting a transnational lifestyle, migrants could successfully conquer the poverty and powerlessness imposed on them by harsh capitalistic systems (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

According to Levitt & Jaworsky (2007), the terminologies and definitions used in migration studies have been subject to criticism due to their ambiguity. Critics have particularly questioned the lack of distinct conceptual boundaries between terms such as global, international, and transnational. As a response, some scholars proposed alternative terminologies including translocalism, bi-localism, and trans-state activity.

Lucassen (2006), as cited by Levitt & Jaworsky (2007), criticized the term "transnationalism," asserting that it is often erroneously viewed as conflicting with the assimilation process. He suggested a new approach by introducing three different forms of transnationalism—bi-local, bi-national, or pan-ethnic—each having different degrees of interaction with assimilation.

Levitt & Jaworsky (2007) also highlight arguments from scholars like Waldinger & Fitzgerald (2004) who suggest that the notion of transnationalism isn't novel, as migrants have traditionally maintained connections with their homelands. They also noted predictions from researchers such as Lucassen (2006) and Portes et al. (1999) that, although the first generation of migrants often maintains strong transnational ties, these connections might decrease over time amongst the second and third generations.

Additionally, Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) discuss how many scholars have challenged the scope and significance of transnationalism. These researchers argue that the concept leans

heavily on specific case studies (as cited in Dahinden, 2005; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004), especially those focusing on migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, who maintain a unique socio-historical relationship with the United States. Some critics have noted that regular transnational engagement is actually quite rare, thereby intensifying the critique of the concept. Furthermore, Levitt and Jaworsky suggest that many scholars believe it is premature to disregard national borders, predicting that the nation-state system is not likely to dissolve in the foreseeable future.

Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) address some criticisms and propose a shift in perspective. They recognize the necessity for a broader conceptual framework that accurately encapsulates the experiences of individuals living in multiple locations. This is in line with an emerging consensus among scholars that studying migration should not be confined to a host-country perspective, acknowledging that transnational dynamics do not matter to all immigrants all the time. Additionally, they note that while the field has generally presented a positive perspective on transnational migration, future research needs to critically assess both the positive and negative outcomes of this phenomenon. This could be interpreted as a response to critics who demand a more balanced perspective on transnational migration. Furthermore, they agree with the general consensus that the field must move beyond thick description, single case studies, and quantification to address a set of more focused themes and questions (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, pp. 14-16).

The work of Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) provides a brief foundation for understanding the relationship between transnational practices and immigrant incorporation. They discuss the importance of recognizing "pluri-local social spaces" and the multi-layered, multi-sited nature of these phenomena, which include not just the home and host countries but other sites around the



world that connect migrants to their co-nationals and co-religionists (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, pp. 3, 4, 14). Building on this, I would like to turn to the work of other scholars such as Waters and Jimenez (2005) to further explore these themes. Waters and Jimenez, provide insights into the dynamics of immigrant incorporation in the host society. In "Assessing Immigrant Assimilation: New Empirical and Theoretical Challenges" Waters and Jiménez (2005) delve into the multifaceted process of immigrant assimilation in the United States. They explore various aspects of assimilation, including socioeconomic progression, geographic settlement patterns, language acquisition, and intermarriage.

One of their most significant findings relates to the challenges immigrants face during the assimilation process. They highlight the issue of fluctuation in educational attainment across generations, with some evidence of a decline in the third generation compared to the second. They also note the impact of residential patterns on assimilation, with a majority of immigrants still concentrating in large gateway cities despite a trend towards initial settlement in suburban areas.

Furthermore, they discuss the linguistic challenges faced by immigrants, with a significant number of individuals maintaining their native language at home despite overall high levels of English language acquisition. Lastly, they discuss the complexities of intergroup relations in new immigrant gateways, where the social hierarchies are less defined, potentially influencing the assimilation process.

The challenges immigrants face during the assimilation process can result in several outcomes. These include educational disparities, where variations in educational attainment among different immigrant generations can limit access to higher education and employment opportunities. Spatial segregation may also occur, as immigrants concentrate in specific areas or

neighborhoods, which can impact social interactions and opportunities for social and economic mobility. Language barriers can create difficulties in effective communication, hindering participation in various settings and limiting access to employment and social networks. Navigating cultural norms and systems in the host society may pose challenges to cultural integration, affecting immigrants' sense of belonging. Eventually, these challenges can contribute to social exclusion, where immigrants may face discrimination and limited access to resources, impeding their full integration and participation in the majority society (Waters & Jiménez, 2005).

These findings from Waters and Jiménez (2005) substantiate the notion that the assimilation process is inherently intricate and multifaceted. Moreover, they emphasize the critical importance of implementing supportive measures to effectively facilitate the integration of immigrants into the host society. Such measures are essential for addressing the challenges faced by immigrants and ensuring their successful adaptation and social inclusion within the broader societal context.

Acculturative stress can be seen as a side effect of the previously mentioned challenges. This form of stress is a direct result of the process of acculturation, which involves the psychological adjustments that individuals make as they adapt to a new cultural environment. Acculturative stress is thus “a reduction in the health status of individuals, and may include physical, psychological and social aspects; to qualify as acculturative stress, these changes should be related in a systematic way to known features of the acculturation process, as experienced by the individual” (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

The intensity and manifestation of acculturative stress can be influenced by a multitude of factors. These include the characteristics of the host society, the nature of the group

undergoing acculturation, the mode of acculturation being experienced, and various demographic, social, and psychological traits of the individuals involved (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

For instance, the nature of the host society and the policies they promote, whether it encourages cultural diversity or pressures conformity to a single cultural standard, can significantly impact the level of acculturative stress experienced by migrants. Similarly, the nature of the acculturating group, whether they have voluntarily chosen to migrate or have been forced to do so, can also influence the degree of stress experienced. The mode of acculturation, which can result in Assimilation, Integration, Separation, or Marginalization, also plays a role in determining the level of stress. For example, individuals who favor Integration, which involves maintaining one's original culture while participating in the larger social network, tend to experience less stress. On the other hand, those who prefer Separation, which involves resistance to further contact with the larger society, tend to experience greater stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

The adaptation approach adopted by immigrants seems to be influenced by the societal context and the specific policies advocated by the host society. It's also likely that the extent to which immigrants identify themselves as part of a particular ethnic group plays a role. Those who have a strong sense of their ethnic identity are more likely to opt for an integration strategy, while those with a less pronounced ethnic self-perception are more likely to lean towards assimilation.

A study conducted on Dutch Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands has provided valuable insights into their preferred acculturation strategy, and the attitudes of the host society towards them (Van Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998). These findings shed light on the consequences

of integration and assimilation of Moroccans in the Netherlands, as well as the reaction of the majority group to the immigrant's acculturation choice. The study supported and compared its findings with the social identity theory and similarity attraction hypothesis. The study concluded that the strategy of assimilation has positive consequences for the minority group. Findings have also shown that the immigrants who choose to integrate experience more prejudice and feel less respected. However, they come to evaluate their ethnicity more positively than immigrants who assimilate.

The study also predicted that the majority society would prefer and show less prejudice to assimilating immigrants than they would to integrating immigrants. For the host society, the strategy of assimilation seems to have favorable consequences for the minority group. The immigrants who choose to assimilate experience less prejudice from the majority group. assimilating immigrants have reported that they feel they are treated with more respect compared to those who choose to integrate. Furthermore, majority society members show more sympathy for assimilating than for integrating immigrants. On the other hand, immigrants who choose integration as an acculturation strategy have a more positive outlook on their ethnic descent and maintain closer ties with their compatriots. The study supports its finding by advancing Tajfel's social identity theory, which states that integration makes ethnic categories more salient, which in turn leads to unfavorable attitudes toward immigrants. They counter this threat to their social identity by feeling more positive about their ethnic group.

The prevailing sentiment among the majority of Dutch people is conditional, immigrants are subjected to less discrimination and are treated with more respect if they abandon their original identity and assimilate. Furthermore, their likability increases if they choose to shed the values and beliefs of their origin country and replace them with the ones from the majority

members. It seems that the majority of Dutch people have a preference for minorities who resemble their own cultural identity. This observation lends support to the similarity-attraction hypothesis. Moroccan immigrants perceive and respond to the attitudes and emotions of the majority population towards them. In The Netherlands, the decision of immigrants to integrate or assimilate significantly impacts the majority group's perception, and immigrants adjust their behavior in response to this.

In line with the research discussed earlier, a comparable research project was undertaken to delve deeper into how Moroccan immigrants and the Dutch majority react to four different adaptation strategies (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization). The study examined how respondents reacted to each of the adaptation strategies, as they were confronted with a fictitious scenario representing one of the four strategies and had to indicate if they identified themselves with the person in the scenario. Dutch majority members were asked to estimate the percentage of Moroccans that used a particular adaptation form and were also asked to give their affective and normative reactions to the person in the scenario. The authors assumed that most immigrants do feel the need to have contact with the majority group because this helps them master their new environment, respondents were expected to feel more positive towards integration and assimilation.

The introduction of this study shares similarities with the previous paper, highlighting the ongoing movement of immigrants and the need to understand the processes involved. It acknowledges that European societies are evolving into multicultural entities. Rather than fully assimilating into mainstream society, ethnic groups tend to prioritize the preservation of their cultural heritage. The presence of diversity in modern European societies can have both positive and negative implications. On one hand, it brings the opportunity to introduce new cultures and

benefit from the unique contributions of individuals from diverse backgrounds. However, it also poses challenges as conflicting values and interests can give rise to conflicts.

According to J. P. van Oudenhoven et al. (1998), minority groups generally experience lower socio-economic status compared to the majority group. As cited in Van Oudenhoven et al., social identity theory, proposed by Tajfel (1978) and Turner, Brown & Tajfel (1979), suggests that disadvantaged groups strive to assimilate into the dominant group to establish or maintain a positive social identity, often modifying their cultural characteristics to "pass" as members of the mainstream culture. The concept of passing aligns with the idea of assimilation. However, if joining the dominant group is not feasible or strongly discouraged by their own ethnic group, individuals may adopt an alternative approach to maintaining a positive identity. As referenced in Van Oudenhoven et al., Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) propose that seeking integration with the dominant group, while retaining key elements of their own ethnic group and preserving their original identity, allows individuals to participate in the larger society. As a result, Bochner (1982), as cited in Van Oudenhoven et al., proposes that integration serves as the optimal adaptation strategy as it enables individuals to find a balance between their original culture and the new host culture, facilitating personal development, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting harmonious relations among different groups in society.

The study findings indicate that Moroccans exhibit a clear preference for integration, demonstrating a desire to engage with the majority group while simultaneously valuing the preservation of their own culture. Moroccans strongly identify with individuals who display such behavior, hold them in high regard, and believe that other Moroccans should behave similarly.

Regarding the attitude of the Dutch majority, the results clearly demonstrate positive sentiments towards Moroccans who express a willingness to engage with them. While assimilation is the adaptation form most valued by the majority group, integration is also viewed more positively than separation and marginalization. The majority group places importance on the minority's desire for contact, which indicates an appreciation for the majority members and at least a level of respect for their values. Whether or not the minority members additionally maintain traditional values appears to be of lesser significance. As previously explained, the majority group derives social validation from an integrating minority, and even more so from an assimilating minority, while they may experience disapproval when confronted with alternative adaptation strategies employed by immigrants. Separatists, in particular, convey the message that the majority group is not esteemed enough to warrant contact, and they perceive their values as inferior. Therefore, it is unsurprising that separation is the least appreciated adaptation form among the majority group (J. P. van Oudenhoven et al., 1998).

In France, the Moroccan community's various reactions to assimilation are guided by the many factors that may play a role in the decision to integrate. Straus (2016) reports that because of the deeply rooted discrimination faced by Moroccan Muslim communities, it can be assumed that full integration has not been achieved. Successful assimilation is scaled with indicators such as profession and family income, Moroccan enrollment in French universities, and the number of Moroccan immigrants who have intermarried with the French population. participation in religious services and institutions, the level of religious practice within the home, and the passing on of culture and religion to the second generation (Straus, 2016).

Moroccans may desire to be integrated into the French economic sphere, in order to access better employment opportunities, improve their financial stability, and seek professional

growth. They are aware economic integration also offers social recognition and opportunities for cultural exchange. However, they are not willing to sacrifice their homeland traditions and adopt those of the majority in their new environment. Even for those who embrace assimilation and have a strong desire to blend in, it is not always possible to hide one's race and origins. So the ability to fully integrate may be limited by discrimination. The alternative route is to vehemently defend one's religion and origins. This desire to retain identity in a foreign place usually leads to marginalization which eventually contributes to the isolation of the group, resulting in limited social interactions and a sense of exclusion from the majority society (Straus, 2016).

Turning our attention from one perspective to another, Killian (2002) states that adaptability and selective acculturation are key strategies for Moroccans, enabling them to navigate and find comfort in both their home country and France. A qualitative study conducted on North African female immigrants (Killian, 2002) found that, regardless of the varying degrees of their exposure to French society and education, there was a collective disapproval of specific aspects of French society. The study's participants perceived the French to be aloof, reserved, and overly individualistic, revealing a cultural conflict and the formation of symbolic divisions between their native and host societies.

As their tenure in France extended, many North African women (Tunisian, Moroccan, and Algerian) started reevaluating elements of their own cultural mentality, highlighting issues such as perceived insufficient work ethic and pervasive male dominance. They also began acknowledging and valuing the opportunities that their host country extended to them, particularly in the realms of education and professional growth. Participants displayed a variety of cultural adaptations, with behaviors ranging from fervent preservation of traditional customs to extensive assimilation of French ways. Nevertheless, there was an absolute refusal among



them to fully surrender to French culture or entirely relinquish their indigenous traditions. Each woman exhibited an intricate pattern of selective acculturation, making conscious decisions about which parts of their culture to keep, adopt, or discard (Killian, 2002). The findings from the study resonate with the principles of integration, which permits the continued existence of unique cultural traits within the immigrant population while negotiating contact with the host culture. It showcases how these Moroccan women negotiate and selectively adapt to their host culture while maintaining ties to their heritage.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

### *Research paradigm and inquiry*

This section provides an overview of the research approach utilized in my qualitative grounded theory research, which explores the adaptation process of Moroccan residents in Prague. This chapter encompasses a discussion on how grounded theory is applicable to this study. It covers the essential elements of the research plan, including the methodology, participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical considerations.

### *Research Questions*

This study sought to build a theory to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 What are the primary challenges that Moroccan nationals face when adapting to life in Prague?

RQ2 What strategies do Moroccan nationals use to cope with cultural differences and overcome challenges during the adaptation process?

RQ3 How do Moroccan nationals navigate cultural differences and maintain their cultural identity while living in Prague?

RQ4 What role do social networks and support systems play in the adaptation process for Moroccan nationals in Prague?

### *Methodology Selected*

A qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of the research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation (Stake, 2010), the use of grounded theory is valid when little is known about the phenomenon; the aim being to produce or construct an explanatory theory that uncovers a process inherent in the substantive area of inquiry (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019), with the defining aim to generate theory that is grounded in data. For this research I sought to understand the process Moroccan emigrants and expats go through when they are trying to adapt to Prague life, I aimed to examine their experiences and perceptions while they navigated their adaptation journey, to achieve that goal I followed a specific research design that I will be describing and discussing in the following pages.

This chapter defines and discusses the methodology choices I made to answer my research questions. I will be explaining why I chose to employ grounded theory, and how the method shaped the selection, and use of, particular data generation and analysis methods. I will focus on describing the techniques I used including coding, memo-ing, and constant comparison. I briefly go over the importance of defining the sample universe and the steps I took to advertise the study and select suitable participants. I also tackle the ethical considerations involved in conducting qualitative research, from the rights of the participants to the criteria that ensure that the research is conducted with rigor.

Grounded theory is an inductive, iterative, interactive, and comparative method geared toward theory construction (Charmaz, 2006). The discovery of grounded theory might be the

most cited work in qualitative analysis. It has become one of the most popular methodologies in the qualitative landscape. Its several influential key concepts revolutionized the way qualitative research is conducted, the method triggered the sociological imagination and opened doors for new interpretations for researchers (Charmaz, 2016). Glaser and Strauss are considered the two founders of grounded theory, Strauss was knowledgeable in symbolic interactionism and Glaser descriptive statistics. The two collaborated on a study that examined terminally ill patients who had differing knowledge about their health status. Glaser and Strauss examined how the patients dealt with the knowledge they were dying and the reactions of the healthcare staff caring for these patients (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). During this collaboration, Glaser and Strauss questioned the use of a scientific method of verification for the study, it is during this study that the constant comparative method, a key element of grounded theory, was developed. At the time it was considered an original innovative way of organizing and analyzing qualitative data.

Glaser and Strauss later proceeded to author *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967). Their work elucidated how theory can be generated from data inductively. It challenged the traditional method of testing and refining theory through deductive testing. Grounded theory offered a perspective that challenged a notion prevalent at that time, that quantitative methodology is the sole legitimate and objective approach to establishing facts about the world (Charmaz, 2006). The book challenged the belief that qualitative research lacked rigor, their work also came as a valuable asset because of its detailed methodology that enabled the generation of theory, since their key principals helped researchers in taking calculated steps towards an interpretation grounded in data.

The emergence of grounded theory challenged the preconceived notions linked to qualitative research, it invalidated the belief that qualitative research methods were speculative

and disorganized. It merged data collection and analysis which was a novelty in the world of social science research. The use of this method challenged qualitative endeavors as a mere antecedent to more rigorous quantitative work and proved their value when it comes to studying experiences and social phenomena, demonstrating that qualitative research can produce valuable insights (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory, in essence, emerged as a critique of conventional research methodologies that imposed a rigid separation between theory and research. This traditional approach often formulated theories before initiating the research to test them, consequently stifling the potential for the emergence of novel theories directly from the data.

When using grounded theory, emphasis should be placed on the studied phenomenon and the reflective nature of the research as the theory evolves (Charmaz, 2006). Reflections, revisions, and comparisons on the evolving theory throughout the research study were important in guiding changes in interview questions during my study, to uncover more details of emerging theories Charmaz (2006) states that researchers need to be keenly aware of the subtleties in their data and be able to distinguish similarities and differences. The resulting final product is a theory grounded in data, reflecting the researcher's interpretation of the participant's experience, and consistent with constructive grounded theory.

Grounded theory tools provide explicit, sequential methods for conducting qualitative research. These tools simplify and unify the process of data collection and analysis, enhance the conceptual analysis of qualitative data, and legitimize qualitative research as scientific inquiry. The methodology calls for researchers with an open mind, rather than researchers with thinking that is saturated with preconceived ideas and hypotheses. The data collection is done through methods such as interviews, observations, and study of documents. The method also requires the use of a comparison process that is constant, to analyze the pool of data, and enable the

identification of recurring themes and patterns. The data collected is analyzed by the researcher with the end goal of developing categories and concepts that emerge from the data itself. These categories and concepts are then refined through further data collection and comparison, with the end goal of using their final version to develop a theory grounded in data.

As a novice researcher, I think the undeniable value of grounded theory lies in its ability to explore complex social phenomena. Grounded theory develops theories and explains social phenomena while staying true to the experiences and perspectives of the people involved. I found Charmaz's *Constructing grounded theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis* (2006) to be an excellent guide for students like myself, embarking on their research journey. It formed the basis for this study, allowing me to capture the complexities of subjective experiences and facilitate the development of a broader knowledge base. Charmaz (2006) defines Grounded Theory as a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data' (p. 187).

Her constructivist approach to grounded theory focuses on how participants construct meaning concerning the area of inquiry. It is characterized by its emphasis on the researcher's role in co-constructing experience and meanings with participants and highlighting the potential practical application of the resulting theories. Chamaz's contemporary writing outlines in simple terms key characteristics such as coding, memo writing, analyzing data as it is generated to build theory, selecting core categories from coding, and generating theory. Chamaz's detailed guide combined with her modern outlook on the method helped me stay sharp during the research process, by continually seeing the data through a fresh lens and fostering the possibility of new theories to emerge.

Charmaz has a strong stance when it comes to the rigor and legitimacy that grounded theory holds in the qualitative research space. She asserts that the use of grounded theory generates a detailed and multi-layered understanding of social phenomena. the use of the method is suitable for the study of complicated and ever-changing social processes, done by gathering multiple lived experiences and perspectives from the participants. To move forward with my research, I aligned myself with Charmaz's methodological genre of grounded theory and used her detailed framework to guide my research design.

Grounded theory consists of a set of fundamental characteristics. the data analysis process is guided by two principles: *systematic* and *inductive*, the two principles ensure that the research is rigorous, transparent, and grounded in the data. *Systematic* refers to the well-planned and meticulous data analysis used in grounded theory. From the early stages of data collection to the last stage of interpretation and writing, the process is a delicate endeavor that abides by a set of rules and instructions. Data are collected and analyzed using a set of methods and processes like coding, constant comparison, memo writing, and theoretical sampling. This systemic approach ensures that all data are processed correctly and all aspects are taken into account. On the other hand, *Inductive* refers to the data-driven theory formation that is unique to grounded theory. Codes and categories are constructed from data that is collected rather than from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses and ideas. Starting research with preconceived ideas or hypotheses makes for a failed grounded theorist, researchers have to keep an open mind and let their data guide them. Charmaz (2006) states that a successful grounded theorist uses the data to identify patterns, and develops a theory that explains them in a way that is grounded in data.

Another defining trait of the grounded theory process includes simultaneous involvement in data collection and data analysis, where they both inform each other through the research

process. This allows for a dynamic approach to theory development, where the researcher's emerging insights from the data will guide subsequent data collection, the new data will help refine or challenge existing theories as the study is progressing.

The use of the constant comparative method is unique to grounded theory methodology. The method is considered to be an important technique that facilitates the development of rich and nuanced theories grounded in data. The idea behind the method is to first compare incident to incident in each code. Initial codes are then compared to other codes. Codes are then collapsed into categories (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). This process is done continuously throughout the data analysis process. It is used to find similarities and differences within the data and to continuously polish concepts and theoretically relevant categories. This continual comparative process embraced by the grounded theory method is what distinguishes it from the purely descriptive analysis.

Simultaneous data generation and data collection are fundamental to grounded theory research design (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). Theory development is not limited to the last step of the research process. A theory is advanced and refined, in real-time, as new data emerges, during the steps of data collection and data analysis. Theory development does not only happen at the end of the research process but is rather an ongoing and iterative process that should be integrated into every step of the research. This approach to theory development is unique to grounded theory and is considered one of the key features of this methodology.

The initial purposive sampling process directs the collection and/or generation of data. Participants that can answer the research questions are purposefully selected by the researcher, as the sample is not aimed at population representativeness, but rather focuses on theory construction (Tie & All, 2019). The process of sampling is intimately connected to the

identification and selection of participants who can contribute rich and diverse data, pivotal for constructing and refining the evolving theory. This implies that the sample selection is not necessarily representative of a larger population; instead, it is deliberately chosen based on the study's scope and research questions. The aim is to gather relevant data that will aid in the expansion and fine-tuning of categories within the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). My sampling process was a process of purposeful sampling first, which provided initial data, then theoretical sampling for concepts that are emergent in the data. Consciously pursuing key concepts in data generation signals that a researcher has begun to theoretically sample (Charmaz, 2006). I used theoretical sampling to follow clues and fill in gaps, and test my interpretations as the study was progressing. Since the sample is not predetermined on demographic characteristics or other criteria, there is a possibility that it may change during the research as data and insights emerge. The process of sampling is in itself tied to how the method focuses on developing a rich and nuanced theory, grounded in the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

Another essential characteristic of grounded theory is the delay of the literature review (Charmaz, 2006). It is recommended to minimize contact with the body of literature related to the topic of research until after the data analysis phase. This allows the researcher to approach the data with an open mind, devoid of influence from the existing theories and concepts found in the literature. Avoiding exposure to literature minimizes bias, so a researcher can collect data and analyze it without preconceived ideas or assumptions, it also allows for a smoother identification of themes, patterns, and concepts in the data, that may not have been considered or highlighted if literature has been reviewed beforehand.

The quality and credibility of the study start with the nature of collected data, it is crucial to focus on the questions that direct the study during the data collection process. Including a



self-reflection to determine if enough background pieces of information were collected about the setting, participants, and processes involved in the study. In qualitative research all is data (Glaser, 1967), meaning everything we learn in the research setting or about the research topic can serve as data, however, data varies in quality relevance for the study's emerging interests and usefulness for interpretation, as they matter the most. This is why a researcher's ability to discern useful data and their skill and thoroughness in recording data can make or break the analytic stages of the research. One has to keep oneself in check when it comes to the data collected, by raising questions like: does my data reveal what lies beneath the surface? Is the data I collected reflective of the participant's views and range of actions, and will it be enough to develop analytic categories? It is also valid to question the kind of comparisons that will be made between the data and how they will help in generating ideas and theories.

Moving on now to consider the important question I asked while carrying out my grounded theory research. The first question is "What is happening here?" it is usually followed by: "What are the basic social processes? What are the basic social psychological processes? What are the participants' main concerns?" these questions generate two levels of inquiry, it required that I examine the basic social and psychological processes. I believe it to be important that I examine where observed social processes are and how the participant's actions construct them, as well as who exerts control over these processes and under what conditions. Different participants will attribute a different meaning to the process of adapting to a new environment, it is evidenced by the way they talk about it, what meaning they attribute to it, and how their actions vis-a-vis the process morphs over time.

Grounded theory research uses data collection methods that best fit the research problem and enable the ongoing analysis of the data (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). When

gathering data Charmaz insists that researchers should pay attention to both the actions and words of the participants while meticulously examining the context, scenes, and situations of these actions. It is important to record who did what, when it occurred, why it happened, and how it occurred. This identifies the conditions under which specific actions, intentions, and processes emerged or got muted. She strongly advocates that researchers focus on words and phrases to which participants attribute particular meaning, and find taken-for-granted and hidden assumptions of various participants which may affect these actions. Examining different aspects of the data, and engaging on in-depth levels lead to a high-quality grounded theory.

Charmaz (2006) drew my attention to an important aspect when constructing grounded theory, she states that no matter the data-gathering approach, one should consider how participants invoke ideas, practices, and accounts from both the larger and local cultures of which they are a part. She stresses that It is vital for a grounded theorist to consider that individuals or groups may not merely adopt or replicate elements from other cultures. Instead, they may modify and create novel ideas as they integrate them to suit their specific needs.

When studying the adaptation strategies of Moroccan nationals in Prague, it was important to reflect on how the participants draw from cultural elements from both their home culture and the local culture in which they find themselves. As previously mentioned individuals tend to transform and generate original concepts when integrating cultural elements into their lives, they do so because there is a need to cater to their unique circumstances and requirements (Charmaz, 2006). Their process of adaptation will certainly be influenced by the particular challenges and situations they face. Being attentive to the cultural elements that are pertinent to the adaptive process employed by Moroccan nationals, allowed me to gain a better understanding of the factors that facilitated or hindered a successful adaptation.

### *Recruitment Process*

Recruitment is a crucial step in any research study, and it involves finding and enrolling individuals or groups who meet the eligibility criteria and are willing to participate. In my research, I was interested in exploring the experiences of Moroccans living in Prague, who are considered a minority within a minority. To recruit participants for my study, I employed various strategies, including advertising through social media platforms, online forums, and in-person visits to local Moroccan-owned businesses. I first joined a Facebook group specifically created for Moroccans living in Prague and posted a recruitment message in both English and Arabic languages. Additionally, I joined an ex-pat forum that allowed me to target Moroccans living in Prague based on their nationality and location. I then sent individual messages to potential participants who fit the study's criteria. Furthermore, I later gained access to a WhatsApp group through a participant's invitation, where I could reach out to more Moroccans living in Prague who might be interested in participating in the study. In addition to online methods, I also visited local Moroccan-owned businesses located in the city center of Prague. I explained the research scope and goals in person and asked for their participation. These businesses provided a useful opportunity to reach out to potential participants who might not be active on social media or online forums.

### *Data Collection.*

I conducted and audio-taped in-depth interviews with seventeen Moroccan nationals living in Prague. Ten of the seventeen interviews were in English, and the seven were in Moroccan Arabic which I translated myself into English during the transcription process. The data was analyzed using Charmaz's constructivist research paradigm to capture the complexities of subjective experience and facilitate the development of a broader theory. After carefully

listening to my recordings and transcribing the content of the interviews in its entirety, a set of initial codes was generated, I then engaged in the process of constant comparison between data and data in the interviews, then data and emerging categories and themes within the realm of my topic, these steps facilitated the development of a theory in the later stages of my research. I looked for the similarities, differences, and patterns in my data while simultaneously adjusting and refining the final codes and conceptual categories.

I believe the use of constant comparison in my research led to the formation of a theory that is grounded in data and approximates reflecting the experiences and perspectives of the participants. I have also recorded my thoughts, reflections, and insights by writings memos in the form of bullet points and short paragraphs. This step was of great help when it came to making sense of the large amounts of data I collected, memos allowed me to capture the emerging patterns, and the connection between patterns and themes that I noticed in the early stages of coding. Memos were also an excellent way for me to document my thought process and revisit my early ideas.

My data set is the product of intensive semi-structured interviewing, it consists of seventeen interviews. I opted for interviewing as a data-gathering method because it best fits the research problem and will enable the ongoing analysis of the data. it is the most widely used tool for data collection in qualitative research (Foley, Timonen, Conlon, & O'Dare, 2021). Qualitative interviewing focuses on capturing experiences and perspectives from participants, it also allows for the interpretation and in some cases the explanation of these experiences, concerning their relation to each other and the context in which they arise (Foley, Timonen, Conlon, & O'Dare, 2021). I noted that my interviews took the shape of long directed conversations that allowed for an in-depth exploration of my participant's experiences with adapting to an alien environment. In

my case, the intensive interviews aided in uncovering the multilayered interpretation of each participant's concerns and anxieties that came with the process of moving to Prague.

Interviewing in grounded theory can never be standardized or formulaic (Foley, Timonen, Conlon, & O'Dare, 2021). Considering that emerging concepts in the data guide the researcher to adjust the interview process to explore the meanings and dimensions of emerging prevalent themes. Unstructured interviews where there is no specific set of questions are suitable in a grounded theory study when little is known about the phenomenon under study, and when the study aims to identify the fundamental characteristics of the phenomenon or process under investigation while remaining open to the most significant aspects of it (Foley, Timonen, Conlon, & O'Dare, 2021). The flexibility of qualitative interviewing is valuable for grounded theory. As engagement in data collection and analysis happens in tandem, new questions can be asked of the research participants and data when concepts and theoretical frameworks begin to appear. The emergence of ideas or categories that demand additional inquiry can be pursued by asking interview questions that will extract further insight to achieve a rigorous conceptualization of the data (Foley, Timonen, Conlon, & O'Dare, 2021).

Chamaz (2006) provides an excellent guide for conducting exceptional interviews in grounded theory research. When conducting intensive interviews, she states that it is crucial to explore the participants' interests and adopt a 'want to know more' attitude, to spur unanticipated statements and stories. Participants will expect interviewers to ask questions that invite reflections about the topic being explored. The interviewer's role is to prompt participants to retell their experiences and offer further details with questions like "Can you describe that in more detail?" or "Tell me more?" Requesting clarifying details with follow-up questions is also essential to obtain accurate information and gain a more profound understanding of participants'

experiences and reflections. In interviews, nothing should be glossed over, going beneath the surface of ordinary conversations and examining events, views, and feelings, can encourage participants to share valuable insights. Adopting an approach that puts participants more at ease and signals a genuine desire to learn more can be an effective way to facilitate a rich and productive interview.

To fulfill the purpose of my study, I used my interviews as a vehicle to co-construct meaning in collaboration with my participants. I went into the interviews with open-ended questions, to avoid being limited by predetermined categories and assumptions. Seeking to understand how the Moroccan minority adapts to the Czech culture and Prague life, I first focused on adopting a relaxed conversational style, I aimed at creating an atmosphere that encourages participants to speak freely and openly, I asked my participants to describe and reflect upon their experiences in detail while I listened, observed, and encouraged them to share as much as possible about their adaptation journey. The interviews took the shape of detailed discussions, the participants did most of the talking and I focused on stirring the exchange towards a more coherent discussion, by tailoring my attitude to each participant's conversation style.

My interview process went through preparatory considerations and reflections. I took the time to reflect on my sampling process at the early stages of the study, if my goal is to reach theoretical sampling and data saturation, then how can I get to these participants and extract the data I need? I pondered the best option for interviewing (remote interviewing, in-person interviewing), opting for in-person interviews seemed to be the best choice for my research as it would give me the possibility to be in tune with the participant, be attentive to their body language, tone of voice, and other non-verbal cues, as these can provide valuable insight into the

participant's experiences and emotions (Charmaz, 2006). If an in-person interview was not possible, because of issues related to time and availability of the participant, then a telephone interview is the most viable alternative.

The very first interviews were a bit intimidating for a novice researcher like myself. I avoided asking a large number of questions, for fear that my interview would go into too many directions. I instead focused on taking great care in formulating a small number of questions in my interview protocol, and for it to serve as a device that launches my data collection. As the study progressed, my interview guide adapted and complemented the process, with prompting and probing (when necessary) into a direction that is supportive of theoretical sampling (Foley, Timonen, Conlon, & O'Dare, 2021).

### *Coding Data.*

Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analyzed through a process of open coding. The analytical process of coding is used to identify concepts, similarities, and conceptual recurrences in data (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). It is the key nexus between collecting, generating data and developing a theory that interprets the data. According to constructivist grounded theory, coding consists of at least two phases: initial coding and focused coding. Coding begins directly as the first data start to emerge in the study. Data collection and coding go hand in hand throughout the research project. Charmaz (2006) states that the process of coding relies on an interpretative relationship between the researcher and their data. It entails constructing short labels as they interact with their data. The process of coding is not just a mental activity but also involves physical and kinesthetic participation. In grounded theory, it is imperative to identify what counts as a code. A code captures important elements within the data concerning the research questions and represents

some level of patterned meaning or response within the dataset. In this case, words and statements that reflect the change in situation and adaptation journey that an individual goes through when they cross international borders.

After reading through the data set from the interview transcripts, comes the phase when the initial codes for the analysis are generated, this is what will, later on, allow me to identify patterns in meaning across the data to derive categories relevant to answer the initial research questions. Charmaz (2006) defines coding as “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data” (p. 43). Codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” ((Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63).

I conducted initial coding by reading and analyzing my data set line by line. The initial coding process can also be done word by word, paragraph by paragraph, incident by incident, or use more than one strategy at the same time. During this careful reading, I constructed initial codes grounded in the data. I labeled codes with gerunds (noun forms of verbs) as it helps researchers stay focused on actions and processes while establishing connections between codes (Charmaz, 2006). Initial codes are to be kept short, simple, and precise. Conciseness helps maintain a good pace and generate clear understandable manageable codes.

I approached this step of the coding process as an opportunity to scrutinize and interact with my data set, I reflected on the content by stopping and asking analytic questions about the collected data. Initial coding is supported by the constant comparative method when I start coding very early on in the process, I had to remind myself that initial codes are not always here to stay, they are provisional and constantly open for modification. To refine these codes and



construct a solid fit between data and codes. I constantly compared data with data, data with codes, and codes with codes. Charmaz (2006) emphasizes that by conducting initial coding, the researcher will eventually unearth the most significant or frequent initial codes, these codes are later on used to sift through large amounts of data during the focused coding step.

Focused coding is more rigid, directed, selective, and conceptual than the initial coding process. By partaking in focused coding a researcher begins to synthesize and make sense of larger segments of the data set (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). With an open mind, devoid of preconceptions, I returned to study my earlier codes to select focused codes amongst my initial codes and construct focused codes based on comparisons between clusters of initial codes. At this stage, I also began to code more data, guided by these newly established elaborated codes. Focused coding is about exploring codes and deciding which ones are the best to capture what is happening in the data. And then upgrade these codes into tentative conceptual categories that will serve the grounded theory that is being constructed (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). These conceptual categories are then defined to assess the relationship between them.

The idea is to select segments in the respondent's answers that seem the most relevant to the topic and organize them into meaningful groups. Since I am approaching the data with research questions, the phase of coding will be focused on constructing a feasible theory that will answer the research questions. Coding was done manually, by writing notes on the content of the texts to analyze, as well as using the highlighting technique to find potential patterns, working systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identifying the most interesting aspects that may form the basis of conceptual categories.

After identifying a potential code, it is imperative to link it to the data extract that demonstrates said code. Ideally, there will be several instances of the codes across the data set,

however, the number of instances does not mean that a code, incident, or category is more crucial since I am conducting qualitative analysis. In other words, there is no set-in-stone answer to the question of what proportion the data set needs to display evidence of a code for it to be considered a code.

The inability to quantify the presence of conceptual categories in the data set is what highlights that research judgment is necessary to determine what a category is and how it relates to the research question, so retaining flexibility is key when employing grounded theory. In short, codes are not quantifiable in qualitative research, the relevance of a code goes hand in hand with whether it captures important findings related to the initial research questions, and there is no right or wrong method to determine conceptual category prevalence.

With the use of grounded theory, it is important to maintain consistency when it comes to analyzing the data. A rich textual analysis of the entire data set provides an overview of the prevalent and important themes, the themes coded, identified, and analyzed would need to be a direct reflection of the content of the entire data set, this will inevitably dilute some of the detail and complexity of the data set content. Alternatively, textual analysis can be conducted by providing a more detailed and nuanced account of one particular theme, or group of themes within the data set. This is to be linked to a specific research question of the study's area of interest within the data.

During the analysis step, a researcher should always look back on the series of questions that guide the grounded theory process. First, the initial research questions and the set of questions that determine the way findings will be analyzed and interpreted.

The process of coding and textual analysis started when I began to notice, and look for, patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data, so themes present in individual

accounts that reflect the participant's effort towards adaptation, themes close to their relations, and views on the majority society they settled in, and themes that point to their attitude towards an alien environment, changes in their identity and so on. The analysis that will be a big part of the interpretation and theory formation started at the early stages of coding, as I made sure to jot down ideas and speculate about potential coding schemas from the very beginning.

In qualitative research, analysis is not to be considered a linear process, there is no rigid rule to move from one step to the next, analysis is more of a recursive process, and it allows the researcher to move back and forth as needed, through the different phases, according to the development of the research over time (Ely et al., 1997).

Total immersion with the data set is necessary, it comes with repeated and active reading of the data, reading through the data set multiple times before coding, as ideas and possible patterns develop and are shaped during this stage. This is a crucial step that proved to be useful and laid fertile ground for the rest of my analysis.

After the coding process, comes searching for categories/themes. This stage of the analysis involves sorting all the different codes into potential categories, after collating all the important coded data segments within the identified themes, some codes will go on to form main categories/themes, others will form sub-themes, and others may simply appear to be useless and irrelevant to the analysis.

Once I start to form a sense of the significance of individual categories/themes, the next step is to refine them. There should be a clear distinction between each of the categories/themes, and the data within the main themes should cohere together meaningfully.

A revision of the collated extract from the data attributed to each theme will help to reveal if they indeed form a coherent pattern, discarding whatever themes do not fit with the

initial goal of the analysis, after reviewing and refining the candidate categories/themes, the finished product forms a theory. This theory map needs to accurately reflect the meanings evidenced in the data set as a whole.

Forming an initial theory that I was satisfied with eased the process of identifying the chore of each category/theme and what they are about, and specifying what part of the data each category/theme captures. Each theme and the grouped data extract that matches it are to be organized in an account accompanied by memos that identify what is interesting about each theme and why. When each of the main themes has a descriptive narrative and a detailed analysis that corresponds.

The final report in the form of written analysis is the final step of grounded theory. The findings in the report are to be concise and coherent, they have to form a solid account of the story/narrative carried out in the initial data (Charmaz, 2006). When demonstrating and elaborating on a specific point, it is also necessary to choose vivid examples that will reflect the prevalence of the category/theme. The analysis should go beyond mere data description, it should be a compelling piece that helps illustrate the story present within the data, and support the initial argument related to my research questions.

In other words, the goal would be to select data extracts that reflect the essence of the participants' process of adaptation. After the categorization of the prevalent codes into categories, I am to make generalizations based on the accounts of the participants, take a closer look at the major changes they had to go through when moving across international borders and categorize the series of actions they followed to integrate into the majority society.

### *A Note on Ethics and Rigour in Qualitative Research*

Qualitative researchers' interaction with individuals and communities provides fertile ground for the emergence of ethical dilemmas (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Ethical considerations are an important aspect of grounded theory and qualitative research as a whole, as it involves the collection and analysis of data belonging to human participants. The ethical principles that guide a researcher stress the importance of respecting participants' autonomy, prioritizing their privacy and confidentiality, and ensuring their safety and well-being. An unwavering adherence to these principles constitutes the basis of research conducted ethically and responsibly, with high regard for the participants' dignity and well-being.

Ethical conflict exists in regards to how a researcher gains access to a community and how they affect the participant. A researcher that is not familiar with ethical issues in the qualitative research field is certainly ill-prepared, since any respectable researcher aims at protecting and preserving the participants' well-being, as harm can be prevented and reduced by applying appropriate ethical principles.

Voluntary participation is a core principle of ethical research, it is particularly relevant in qualitative research because the data collection methods such as interviews, and observations call for the active involvement of the participants. Voluntary participation is based on informed consent, which means that participants must agree to take part in the study without threat or undue inducement such as monetary reward, and must know what a reasonable person in the same situation would want to know before giving informed consent (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Informed consent can be seen as a negotiation of trust between the researcher and the participant. It is necessary to establish trust at the beginning and maintain it through the data

collection process, as the researcher must continuously treat the participants as autonomous entities.

Researchers are ethically obliged to provide confidentiality to participants, this indicates that data will be reported in a way that the description or information cannot be associated with a particular individual (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Confidentiality is different from anonymity, which signifies that no one knows the identity of the participant, not even the researcher, this is impossible in most cases since researchers meet participants in person. To protect the participants' identities, the use of aliases and pseudonyms is recommended, although this might not be sufficient if the study is being conducted in a small or closed community. The protection of the participants' identities also applies to the publication of the study, as they should be informed that the result will be published later.

Protecting research participants is a fundamental ethical principle that underpins all research involving human subjects. This principle highlights the importance of ensuring that participants' rights and welfare are respected throughout the research process. A researcher must be just with their participants, exerting additional efforts to avoid all exploitation and abuse as well as being able to recognize vulnerability. Participants should be informed in advance about the types of questions they will be asked and the researcher should remind them they have the option not to answer certain questions or to end the interview whenever they wish. Another way of being just while conducting research is being attentive toward minorities and disadvantaged groups within your sample universe as well as protecting the ones who are most susceptible such as children, the mentally ill, and the elderly.

My involvement with the Moroccan community in Prague required careful consideration. Although as a Moroccan researching Moroccan nationals, I had a unique advantage since I was

able to draw upon my shared cultural background, language, and life experiences with the participants. This helped me establish a deeper level of trust with the participants, which facilitated more open and honest answers. Moreover, my familiarity with Moroccan culture and customs allowed me to ask more nuanced questions and elicit more detailed and insightful responses. Overall, I think my shared cultural background with the participants provided a distinct advantage in conducting this research.

The principles mentioned above guided my research journey, I respected my participants and recognized that they have rights including the right to be informed by the study, the right to decide whether they wish to participate and, the right to withdraw at any time. My research relied on collecting data through interviews, while in the field I had to negotiate access to the participants and their close circle to retrieve the information I needed. Interviews are equated with confidentiality, informed consent, and privacy. I was aware of my duty as a researcher to maintain confidentiality, and I prepared myself to potentially deal with ethical issues that may occur as the study progresses. With every single participant, I fully disclosed the purpose of the study, provided a full description of the research design and method, I also briefed them before commencing the interview, I made sure to ask if their participation was voluntary and informed them that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Qualitative research rejects the criteria used by quantitative research when evaluating a study. The qualitative landscape replaced standards like reliability, validity, and generalisability with ones that correspond more with qualitative researchers' specific research ideals (Finlay, 2009). Qualitative researchers often face challenges when it comes to ensuring the quality and trustworthiness of their work. It is not common that every research project will result in knowledge claims that are powerful and convincing in their own right. This means that the value

of qualitative research needs to be justified against a set of established criteria (Finlay, 2009). Arguing and justifying qualitative research findings is an important step toward demonstrating the value and integrity of work that took effort and time to finalize, especially when you are a researcher that needs to convince a skeptical audience, funding parties, and ethical panels. Finley's article '*Rigour*', '*Ethical Integrity*' or '*Artistry*'? *Reflexively Reviewing Criteria for Evaluating Qualitative Research* (2006) is an interesting piece that discusses how qualitative research is moving away from traditional positivist criteria, highlights the properties of the alternative proposed standards, in an attempt to persuade qualitative research authors to move away from the traditional positivist ideals that undermine the qualitative enterprise.

The three concepts of reliability, validity, and generalisability form the basis of evaluation for traditional quantitative research. However, the qualitative landscape challenges these positivist criteria, as they simply do not work and are not compatible with the nature of qualitative inquiry (Finlay, 2009). Reliability refers to consistency in the collected data, this is viewed as irrelevant in qualitative research since by definition the goal of qualitative research is not to be consistent or gain consistent results, it is rather to extract information from a participant or a researcher in a unique interpersonal context. Qualitative research thrives off of the fact that a situation cannot be replicated, the data extracted in a particular setting is dependent on the researchers' approach and the researcher-participant relationship. Validity refers to the extent to which research measures what it intends to measure. This criterion rests on the assumption that the phenomenon under investigation has an objective reality that is universally agreed upon. However, qualitative researchers argue that this assumption is flawed because of the diversity of the social world. They argue that there is no single, unequivocal reality to which all findings must adhere. Instead, they raise the question of whose reality the research is addressing. When it



comes to generalisability, qualitative researchers do not aim to apply the findings from a particular sample to the broader population through statistical extrapolation. Rather, they aim to demonstrate that their findings can be transferred and are meaningful or relevant when applied to other individuals, contexts, and situations. As a result, qualitative researchers may value the richness and depth of data obtained from a single participant who was intentionally selected. They argue that the conventional experimental emphasis on obtaining a large, randomly chosen representative sample does not apply to their research goals (Finlay, 2009).

Let us now turn to how qualitative researchers evaluate the integrity of their work process and the quality of their end product, by using criteria that are responsive to qualitative research ideals and goals. These criteria allow the researcher to highlight the strengths and limitations of their research and to claim rigor in their research approach. Rigour can be defined as a way to establish confidence and trustworthiness in the findings of a research study. It allows researchers to maintain consistency in their research design/methods (process) and to present an accurate representation of the population studied and their experiences. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria to ensure rigor in the qualitative landscape have been quite influential in social sciences. The four criteria have been relabeled after four existing conventional inquiry principles. they are credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). To replace the idea of internal validity, researchers focus on the concept of credibility in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the degree to which findings make sense is what matters. To achieve credibility, qualitative researchers use techniques like member checking, in which participants are given transcripts and research reports to agree or disagree with the findings. Prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, and triangulation of data are also effective ways to build credibility. In place of external validity,

the concept of transferability is used. Rather than attempting to achieve probabilistic reasoning and random sampling, qualitative researchers are advised to present a comprehensive depiction of the research setting. The purpose is to offer enough details to enable readers to assess the relevance of the findings and their applicability to other settings. The concept of dependability replaces reliability, and it emphasizes the importance of providing an audit trail for the research process. This involves documenting the data, methods, and decisions made during the research, which can then be reviewed and scrutinized by external parties. And finally, Confirmability, which replaces objectivity, relies on auditing as a means to demonstrate quality. To achieve this, the researcher can provide a transparent and self-critical analysis of the research methodology used. Triangulation of data, researcher, and context can also be used as effective tools to ensure confirmability (Finlay, 2009).

In a brief piece titled *Rigor in Qualitative Research* (2011), Oliver (2011) declares that the absence of a scoring guideline to review qualitative research is to be replaced with a suitable qualitative assessment framework. She maintains that a solid research design is key, whether it is connected to a preexisting theoretical framework or a set of research questions and problems that guides the research process. The research design should be articulated with enough details to allow for replication. This means a clear definition of data collection, protocol, and tools such as interview guides, field notes, memos, and observation guides.

Any reader should be able to understand the sampling strategy. This, too, should be connected with the theoretical framework or research questions. Sampling methods should be discussed at length, including who was selected, how they were selected, how many were involved, and why this sampling strategy was implemented (Oliver, 2011).

It is also expected that the data analysis should be described. There should be enough information about how the data analysis was performed, how the coding was done, and how it is linked to the theoretical framework and/or research questions. The credibility of the analysis allows others to recognize the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants' experiences. The credibility of an experience is viable when people sharing that experience are immediately able to recognize it. There are numerous ways to accomplish this including co-coding, peer debriefing, member checking, and the establishment of an audit trail (Oliver, 2011).

It is important to consider how credibility is related to the quality of the data collected. While credibility ensures the trustworthiness of the research findings, other components of rigor, including transferability, dependability, and confirmability, also play a role in ensuring the quality of the data. The quality of the data gathered cannot be determined by prescribed tests or formulas, it rather lies in the data's ability to display a picture of the world we live in and bring us close to understanding human experiences. Continuous detailed attention must be paid to the quality of qualitative data, and the way we go about making judgments about its content. It is also imperative to use techniques and approaches that will help improve the reliability and validity of collected data and theories constructed based on these data (Seale & Silverman, 1997).

Data quality affects all aspects of findings and interpretations made by the researcher. to improve data transferability, it is necessary to provide a detailed description of the population studied as well as the context in which the study was conducted. This assists the reader in determining whether the findings apply to other contexts or populations. Similarly, dependability

ensures consistency in the research process, which is critical for ensuring data quality. Finally, confirmability is achieved through reflective research practices.

### Chapter three: Participants' Narratives, Journeys, and Experiences

Table 1 Participant Demographics and Background Information (N=17)

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Length of stay	Background information
♂ Mohsin	31	Payroll Analyst	9 yrs	Mohsin initially arrived in Prague as a student before transitioning into the job market and eventually finding his current position. He obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of Life Sciences, located in Prague.
♂ Azzedine	29	Barber	6 yrs	Azzedine's journey to Prague began when he met his Czech partner, who is now his wife, while she was visiting Morocco. Having studied photography, Abdou initially relied on the support of his wife and her family to find various job opportunities in Prague. Eventually, he made the decision to work as a barber at a Tunisian-owned business.
♂ Alarbi	32	Sales and Marketing manager	5 yrs	Alarbi, originally from a small village in Morocco, relocated to Prague to be with his partner, who already had a job in the city. Prior to moving to Prague, he had lived in Turkey for his university studies. Larbi secured employment in Prague through an impressive interview process with a company, which also facilitated his relocation from Turkey. He considers his Slovak spouse a strong support system and credits her for helping him navigate the challenges of settling in Prague.
♀ Samia	26	Automotive engineer	5 mos	Samia's decision to move to Prague was influenced by discussions with fellow Moroccan expatriates, who are also participants in this study, on

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LinkedIn. These individuals were already pursuing careers in her field in Prague. Driven by the ambition to tackle larger projects and challenges, Samia successfully interviewed with a prospective employer in Prague, who then facilitated her relocation.

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♀ Mouna	32	Sales Engineer	4 yrs	Mouna moved to Prague after receiving an internship offer while traveling South America. Before permanently settling here, she was a student in Spain and briefly lived in France. Manal recalls that her initial experience with her first employer was far from ideal, and she faced challenges when trying to adapt and settle in at first.
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♀ Salma	31	Stay-at-home mom	3 yrs	Salma is no stranger to moving to different countries and experiencing new cultures. Her husband's job requires them to constantly relocate, so she considers their family as an expat family. Before moving to Prague, Sofia lived in South Korea, Germany. And France. Nowadays, she spends most of her time taking care of her son, focusing on being a dedicated mother. Salma found companions in the fellow Moroccan moms that reside in Prague
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♂ Mohamed	23	Student	3 yrs	Mohamed relocated to Prague after receiving a partial scholarship from Prague City University, where he is currently enrolled in a cybersecurity specialization program. He was delighted to discover that the program aligned perfectly with his needs and interests. Additionally, Mohamed is employed by a Czech startup, where he works in an IT support role.
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♂ Abdulrazzak	49	Entrepreneur	22 yrs	Abdulrazzak arrived in Prague accompanied by his Czech partner after they met during a summer break in Morocco and decided to get married. While searching for a full-time job, Abdulrazzak also enrolled in a master's degree program. He initially worked as an English teacher in the education
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field before venturing into the restaurant and real estate businesses.

Notably, Abdulrazzak stands out as the only participant who is fluent in Czech and holds Czech nationality.

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♀ Jihane	30	Demand planning manager	2 yrs	Jihane's relocation to Prague took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her company made the decision to close its branch in Morocco, but instead of ending her employment, they offered her a full-time position and assistance with the relocation to Prague. Despite being married, Jihane decided to seize the opportunity and try out the new position in Prague. She felt a sense of comfort knowing that if things didn't work out as expected, she could always return home.
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♀ Hafsa	27	Project Coordinator	2 yrs	Hafsa's relocation to Europe was catalyzed by career prospects and a fascination with Prague. Initially approached by recruiters from her current company on LinkedIn, her professional ambitions led her to consider an international relocation. Having previously visited Prague, she was keen to explore a more permanent residence in the city, merging her professional aspirations with her personal interests.
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♂ Mehdi	26	software engineer	2 yrs	Prior to moving to the Czech Republic, Mehdi had a strong desire to relocate to Europe and had shortlisted several European capitals, including Prague. In Morocco, Mehdi worked in various positions within his field. However, he felt the need to enhance his career prospects and live in an environment that aligned better with his personality.
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♂ Hassan	27	Software	2 yrs	Hassan's decision to move to Europe was prompted by dissatisfaction with
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engineer

the Moroccan job market and a strong desire for change. An opportunity arose when his current employer proposed a relocation. Introduced to the company through another study participant, Hassan viewed the Czech Republic as a transit country on his professional journey.

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♀ Halima 45 Customer 14 yrs  
service agent

Halima made the decision to relocate to Prague after meeting her husband, who is also Moroccan, at her workplace. They developed a strong connection and decided to get married, choosing to build their life together in the Czech Republic. Leveraging her proficiency in the French language, Halima successfully obtained a position in customer service at an international company.

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♀ Naoual 38 Foreign 13 yrs  
exchange agent

Naoual's relocation was prompted by marriage. She met her husband, who is also Moroccan, through extended family connections, and as a result, she decided to move to be with him. After completing an extensive language course where she acquired the basics, Najat worked at a preschool cafeteria before joining her husband in his line of work at a currency exchange office.

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♂ Moustapha 32 Hotel Porter 1 year

Moustapha's decision to move to Prague was sparked by his encounter with his wife who is Slovak during a tourism circuit in Fez, Morocco. Both of them were working in the tourist industry at the time. Initially, they developed a friendship that eventually blossomed into a relationship, leading to their marriage. However, due to the language barrier in Prague, Moustapha had to transition to a different line of work. Currently, his primary focus is balancing his new job with his family responsibilities.

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♂ Nour-eddine 37 Senior 1 year  
Accountant

Nour-eddine made the decision to move to Prague when his company presented him with the opportunity to relocate and take on additional

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responsibilities. Previously, he was based in Budapest, Hungary.

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♂ Youssef	22	Student	1 year	After graduating from high school, Youssef had a clear goal in mind: to pursue an education in creative media in Europe. Although Yassir is Moroccan by nationality, he grew up in Dubai. He took the initiative to apply to various universities in Italy and the Czech Republic. Eventually, he was accepted into Prague City University, where he is currently studying for a bachelor's degree in creative media production. Alongside his studies, Yassir is also actively involved in playing professional football in the fourth division of Western Prague.
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This segment of my research serves solely as a descriptive account of the data gathered during my interviews, devoid of any analysis. Its relevance lies in shedding light on each participant's experience, highlighting the context of their move as well as the strategies they employed to adapt to a new environment. Each account in this study includes information on how the participants were recruited or introduced to the study through other participants, which offers valuable insights into the nature of relationships among members of the Moroccan community residing in Prague. I will deliberately leave out any discussion on the method or other technical aspects, as these topics are fully addressed in my methodology chapter.

While my preference is to structure the data description to align with the chronological sequence of meetings with each participant, as this vividly illustrates their interrelationships and highlights how the snowballing effect played a pivotal role in my introduction to certain participants and their involvement in the same social media groups and social circles, the collected data can nevertheless be distinctly segmented into two categories. The first



encapsulates encounters with working professionals and students who opted to move to Prague predominantly due to career or academic ambitions. These individuals represent a spectrum of experiences, motivations, and challenges, largely shaped by factors such as their respective industries, education levels, cultural backgrounds, and language abilities. On the other hand, the second category emphasizes interactions with individuals who relocated primarily due to family reasons, this does not imply that they don't work or pursue education post-relocation. Rather, it denotes that their relocation was mainly motivated by familial or romantic ties, rather than individualistic aspirations. Their experiences might be heavily influenced by aspects like the dynamics of their familial relationships, the age and requirements of family members, and the involvement of their partners in their adaptation process.

The data for this study was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with seventeen Moroccan nationals living in Prague. All were conducted in person, except for two of them that happened over the phone with Naoual and Halima. I followed an open-ended approach to elicit the participants' experiences, challenges, and strategies related to adaptation. Through the interviews, I explored various aspects of the participants' lives in Prague, including their social network, language learning efforts, employment experiences, education paths, cultural integration, and reflections on personal change and future plans.

My engagement with Participant One, for instance, transpired through text messaging. He reached out to me directly after spotting my ad on an expat forum, offering his time and assistance. During our brief exchange about the study and interview specifics, he willingly offered to help me find more participants, acknowledging the potential difficulty due to the small size of the Moroccan community in Prague. He referred to a small group of Moroccan friends,

one of whom he considers close, and assured me of their potential willingness to participate in the study.

Participant One, named Mehdi, introduced me to four other participants. They included a person he met online before moving to Prague whom he now considers to be a close friend (Mohamed), a former colleague who also relocated with him to the Czech Republic (Hassan), and a woman seeking information about Prague's living conditions and job market before her move (Samia). The fourth person was a student attending the same school as his close friend (Youssef). Mehdi suggested that I could attend one of their regular social gatherings, which occur at least bi-monthly, to facilitate introductions and warm the group up to the idea of study participation. However, I conveyed my preference for one-on-one preliminary meetings, as they would be more suitable for the study. Post our interview, Participant One compiled a small database containing their names and phone numbers, enabling me to independently reach out to them.

Mehdi's account of his initial month in Prague was interlaced with references to his close friend, Mohammed “*When I first came here, I wouldn't say I struggled in the first month or two. I didn't struggle at all. It was a smooth transition, mostly because my friend was already here. I think he helped me a lot in the very beginning. I knew him before I came here.*” . Mehdi's decision to move was driven by his desire to live in a European capital, a setting he felt more attuned to his personality and interests. He yearned for a place with scenic beauty and actively pursued this aspiration by applying to numerous companies across Europe. An offer from a start-up in Karlín, Prague, prompted his decision to relocate. The company's assistance with visa paperwork and housing was instrumental during the move. Knowing that he could rely on Mohammed facilitated the technical aspects of the transition, such as transportation and

shopping. Mehdi met Mohammed on a Discord server while he was still in the visa application process, and their friendship began on Mehdi's first day in Prague. For Mehdi, the greatest challenge was the language barrier. His initial three months were stressful, as the probation period at his new job held the risk of failure and potential return home. So he put all his focus and efforts into performing well at work. Yet, fitting into an exclusively Czech team remained difficult. Even though Mehdi's company had an international workforce, he found himself in a team that spoke English professionally but reverted to their mother tongue socially, making him feel alienated. *“So, first time I relocated with a company, I was put on a team with five different Czechs. And I was the only foreigner. So it was five Czechs who have been working together for four years. They were friends as well. And I think it was the hardest thing ever. Because, yes, we would communicate in English, have meetings in English. But once the meeting is done, they would... Of course, they're friends. They would start to speak with each other in Czech. And I would just keep rolling my eyes. Like, what the hell is this? Yeah, but this was, I think, the only time I've experienced the language barrier, truly.”*

Mehdi was aware of the language challenges in Prague, but he anticipated that being part of an international company and English-speaking social bubble would shield him from daily language struggles. He expected minor difficulties with the older Czech population at the grocery store and tax office. Still, he assumed that younger crowds would comfortably converse in English, much like his circle back home. His discontentment with his first employer was evident, and after six months with no improvement in team dynamics, Mehdi switched to a larger company with a more diverse team (Microsoft). He noted that within the expat bubble, communication was smoother, primarily because English was the default language among his fellow expatriates. Although he stated that he found it difficult to create and maintain friendships

with the Czechs because of their cold nature and already-established social spheres, Mehdi has been able to maintain some degree of contact with the locals. His connections include a Czech and a Slovak individual, whom he met through a dating app. This limited yet fulfilling social interaction appears to satisfy Mehdi's need for companionship, reinforcing the idea that quantity doesn't necessarily equate to quality when it comes to relationships in a new country.

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Mohamed moved to Prague in September 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic, a year prior to Mehdi's arrival. His early interactions were confined to a brief friendship with a flatmate and a few international students he met during online classes, in addition to his connection with Mehdi and their burgeoning friend group which will come later. Education was the key reason for Mohamed's move. He was keen on finding the right study program and chose a British university here in Prague with a good reputation. The nature of the program and the partial scholarship he received were big factors in him making the move. Besides studying, Mohamed also works in a Czech startup, doing IT support. He says he really enjoys his job because he feels his skills and knowledge were valued. He liked that he wasn't micromanaged and that his contribution mattered. When he had issues with official paperwork, Mohamed turned to the Prague Integration Center for Foreign Nationals, a governmental institution that provides free legal consult for students, working professionals, and refugees. They helped him understand laws about housing and work permits. During my interaction with Mohamed, he mentioned that as a foreigner it can be difficult when you are confronted with bureaucratic hurdles, so you have to be well aware and make use of the resources at your disposal, notably the Prague integration

center for Foreign Nationals and the ministry of interior's hotline *"the first thing is that you shouldn't work with presumptions about how the country should work. You are the person who needs to integrate. It's not the environment that needs to adapt for you. You need to adapt to your environment. Being open, some of the things that you might have believed to be just fine to do in Morocco, you go and notice, actually they are not. These are the things that I would suggest. In terms of culture, legalities and everything else, these are the things I would focus on. I would give advice to reading up on what you don't need to do in terms of legal things. Do you report applying on time, to report on the changes, to do things. Ask people to do certain things, be aware of them because they are your responsibility, not someone else's. That's the advice I would give. In terms of culture, yes, there are things that are different, but you need to adjust to them and not be mad that they are different. Just try to accept them as they are and try to find your way around."*

It was at his university that he crossed paths with Youssef, a fellow Moroccan student, who he then introduced to Mehdi. This encounter marked the beginning of their close-knit friendship group.

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Youssef, the third individual in this interconnected group, relocated to Prague to attend the same university as Mohamed, pursuing a degree in Creative Art and Media. Born and raised in a Moroccan family, he spent a significant portion of his life in Dubai. Before he arrived in Prague, Youssef had carved a niche for himself in junior football, a successful endeavor. Before finalizing his move to Prague, Youssef proactively sought opportunities to continue his football

career. His efforts yielded results as he secured a semi-professional role in a local football club after sending out his resume to various clubs in the area. The transition from the conservative, modest culture that he was used to, to the cultural environment of Prague, posed substantial challenges. However, Youssef approached these with an open mindset. In academia, Youssef intentionally fostered relationships with classmates hailing from various parts of Europe, creating a network that helped him establish a sense of belonging in the new setting *“I think the best way is honestly to socialize as much as possible, because I feel like so many people want to find the comfort zone of socializing with people that are from the same nationality or same mindset. And I think here, especially if you come from Morocco, I don't know, maybe Morocco it would be easier for you to integrate in Europe, but if you come from, like where I came from, the Middle East, it's not as easy because it's a completely different lifestyle, I'm not only talking about people, I'm talking about everything here is different, compared to the Middle East, like everything in the Middle East is so easy and spoon-fed, like you want to go anywhere, you have your car; you just take it and go, but here, the fact that you have to go out and walk, some people like it, some people don't like it, I think it's just that to keep an open mind for everything, and to not look for your comfort zone, that's the easiest way, because I think that's how I did it, and I have an Algerian friend in my school, she also came from Dubai, and she's not happy here because she's not socializing as much, and I keep telling her, let's go out, let's socialize, I'll introduce you to new people, but she just doesn't want to get out of her comfort zone, so I think that's why she's not integrated here well.”*

Nevertheless, Youssef's journey was not without significant obstacles, particularly within his football club. He faced extreme racism from his teammates, a hostility he could identify even without fully understanding the language. The racism extended to the spectators who would taunt

him with monkey noises during games. Amidst this, a half-Czech, half-Algerian teammate emerged as his sole supporter. While some level of initiation was anticipated as a new team member, the intensity of the discrimination Youssef experienced was unexpected. Apart from his close friends, including Mehdi, Hassan, Samia, and Mohamed, Youssef also worked on building relationships with his coach and teammates. He was open to meeting new people, including classmates from different parts of Europe. Even though he grew up in Dubai and Morocco, he was willing to step out of his comfort zone, even visiting places like bars that didn't align with his personal beliefs. For Youssef, building relationships was essential, even if it meant stepping into unfamiliar territory and adopting a more flexible mindset.

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Samia moved to Prague due to her desire for more fulfilling work in the automotive industry. Prior to her move, she had hoped to work for a French car company but was put off by their demand for her to remove her scarf. Her quest for career advancement led her to an opportunity in Prague, where she was welcomed by her current employer's positive HR experience and rapid hiring process. I was introduced to Samia through Mehdi, they came to know each other on the LinkedIn platform where Samia reached out to Mehdi seeking information about the city from a fellow Moroccan's point of view.

*“Before coming to here I talked to one friend. He was the first... He was the first person I talked to in here in chat. Actually, at the same time I talked to two people. But Mehdi was the one who was really straightforward and was answering my questions. He was supportive. So I decided to not talk to the other person and follow up...when I wanted to find someone here in the*

*Czech Republic I had no idea how to find someone. Because on Facebook sometimes people lie. So I don't know if they live in the Czech Republic or not. And there is no filter to look for someone in the Czech Republic on Facebook. But on LinkedIn it's possible. And I was looking for automotive engineers here in Morocco and I found none. And then I looked for engineers. And then I found two. The two I talked to you about. And Mehdi was one of them. So I found him through LinkedIn. And we were talking via LinkedIn about the process, the visa, everything. Whenever I have some questions I just ask him”*

Once in Prague, Samia was met with cultural differences that forced her to navigate new terrain. Initially, her lack of information about Czech culture proved challenging. While Prague's diverse expatriate community provided some comfort, Samia noted that Czech people seemed less welcoming and more introverted compared to Moroccans. *“I did some small research. But for me, I'm not moving here for the country. I was moving for work. So it's the most important. But when I came here it showed up that I should have thought more about the people and the country. Here in Prague, there are so many expats and people from other countries. It's the part in which any foreigner will be very comfortable. For example, some friends I have in Pilsen and in Ostrava and other places. It's not that easy. They speak only Czech. But here we speak most of the time English. So I don't have any issue with talking in English. And people here talk in English most of the time. The thing I remarked about Czech people is that they are not very welcoming. They are very introverted people. I have until now two friends. A guy and a girl. The girl works with me. We built up a relationship in just one evening. We were just talking. The vibe just went. We were friends. And the other person I met on an app. It's HelloTalk.”*

She also faced dietary difficulties as a Muslim, as finding halal food was often inconvenient due to the limited availability of halal shops *“In food. I am a Muslim girl. So I had*



*to deal with food. Even in bread they sometimes put pork and alcohol. Which is not possible for me. I am trying now to go to Halal Grocery. But it's difficult. Sometimes you just want to have something outside. Because my work is very huge. Sometimes we stay at work until 8 or 9 pm. It would be better for me to find somewhere where I can eat without thinking twice. Halal shops or Halal restaurants are very counted on the hand fingers. Very few. It's difficult for me because I am living somewhere. And I am going to the other side of Prague. Or I need to go for about 45 minutes. And there are restaurants just around. I can just eat in some restaurant 10 minutes away. I need to take travel for 40 minutes sometimes just to have a meal. Because sometimes I am very tired and I cannot... You don't want to cook. You want just something ready.”*

Despite these challenges, Samia adopted several strategies to adapt to her new environment. She took to social media and apps such as Hello Talk and Meetup to connect with locals and learn more about Czech culture. She also participates in planned activities such as board games and karaoke night where she met her fair share of expats. She states that she made an effort to socialize with her colleagues at work by being open to discussions about their cultural differences. Language acquisition was another priority for Samia; she requested Czech language lessons from her employer to facilitate better integration *“I was planning to learn at least their language. Just to be able sometimes to speak to someone in the streets. Sometimes someone doesn't speak English. They want to help you. They want to talk to you. But they don't speak English. So I was planning to start some courses. But now my company will issue some lessons in the Czech language. And it will be weekly based. I have nothing to do about this. Because I will have some courses with my company. I think this is the first thing I can do. Otherwise, it's difficult to get into the groups. I think this is the most challenging thing.”*

However, Samia found the healthcare system particularly challenging due to language barriers. She recalled distressing experiences at the hospital, where non-Czech-speaking patients often faced mistreatment. Despite such hurdles, Samia remains committed to understanding and respecting her host country's culture while retaining her roots. This resolve is evident in her efforts to form a diverse social network, including a close-knit group of expats and her fellow Moroccans. She seeks comfort in these friendships and takes the opportunity to converse in Darija, her native language. Despite dietary challenges and weather-related health concerns, Samia does not view Prague as her permanent home. However, she remains determined to capitalize on her time here for career advancement.

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The last member of the small circle is Hassan, a software engineer, who began his journey to Prague by working remotely from Morocco for six months before relocation became viable. His connection to the first participant of this study was established through shared professional interests and similar migration paths, both securing roles in the same Czech startup *“Yeah, like, I stayed at Mehdi's place for my first few days. He helped me a lot, like, showed me around the city and taught me a few things. And then when I moved on my own, I forgot about all of them and I had to start from scratch.”* Contrary to the first participant, who ended up in an exclusively Czech team, leading to a subsequent job switch, Hassan found camaraderie in his diverse team, notably forming a close bond with a fellow Moroccan other than Mehdi. The rest of his team was predominantly composed of Brazilians. Hassan's view of the cultural differences between Morocco and the Czech Republic was markedly critical, labeling certain Czech

practices as 'bad habits' and wanting no part in them *“Okay, so this topic is like interesting for me because a lot of people, when they tell me to adapt, you have to do this, this, or this. And most of the things they tell me to do is basically picking up bad habits like drinking, smoking, you know, doing that kind of thing because it's easier to adapt once, you know, and fit in...for me, I just thought I'm not going to do any of that. I would just go to events, interact with people and see how it goes. So I do think I'm pretty much integrated here in a way where like I know the city, I know how people live here and stuff. Right. And I'm kind of satisfied with my life here, but I'm still like like some people would still say that I'm not integrated, for example, because I don't speak the language. I don't do all the fun stuff they do and things like that.”* He particularly distanced himself from the prevalent drinking culture, claiming it to be a barrier to forming meaningful relationships.

Furthermore, adhering to his religious practices in the Czech Republic presented unique challenges, such as the scarcity of halal food options. Beyond culinary obstacles, Hassan expressed discomfort over public displays of affection prevalent in Czech society, perceiving them as a cultural shock. His most distressing experience, however, was associated with a healthcare encounter. While severely ill, Hassan struggled to communicate with the hospital staff due to language barriers, leading to heightened anxiety about potential future health crises. Experiences like these have fortified Hassan's determination to relocate to a country with greater English proficiency in the future. Despite the cultural differences between his own culture and Czech culture, Hassan mentioned that he still made efforts to adapt by creating a social network within the local expatriate community. He mentioned attending group activities like organized board game nights and language exchanges, where he met a diverse group of English speakers and acquaintances some Moroccan and others with similar cultural backgrounds to his own.

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One of the individuals in this study is Nour-eddine, an acquaintance of Hassan's within the expatriate community. Interestingly, Nour-eddine's involvement in this study wasn't a result of an introduction by Hassan. Instead, he took the initiative to participate after spotting my post in a Facebook group for the Moroccan diaspora living in the Czech Republic. Unlike other participants, Nour-eddine didn't directly relocate from Morocco; he had already been living in Hungary for his university studies and remained there for work. He moved to Prague because his company urgently required his services here. Nour-eddine viewed changing countries as a challenge, despite his long-standing residence in Europe. His initial weeks in Prague proved tough, with the local culture's perceived coldness being a shock to him. The quality of customer service, which he believed was impacted by language barriers, added to his discomfort.

Nour-eddine identifies himself not as an immigrant, but as an expatriate. His proficiency in English played a crucial role in the circles he joined. His primary strategy for adaptation involved immersing himself in the expatriate community, where he felt a shared understanding of his experiences *"My third strategy is socializing. It is very important. I used InternNations for example, a language exchange. You have to find people who are in the same situation as you. That's where I met a Moroccan and many other people. I have a preference for board gaming. So no matter the country, I look for a group that plays board games. So I can meet people like me. So this is an important strategy...The advantage in Europe, when you go to any county to find a small international community within the county, I live in that bubble. The problem is the lack of*

*interest. I want to stay in my bubble where I can communicate using English and mingle with international people. ”*

An encounter with a Czech woman at an expatriate event eased his early adaptation process. She offered her services as a language facilitator, helping non-Czech speakers navigate administrative tasks. With her assistance, Nour-eddine was able to manage issues like reserving a parking spot for his car. Despite his efforts to integrate, Nour-eddine faced explicit discrimination when looking for accommodation; landlords would often state a preference for Czech or Slovak tenants. Nour-eddine highlights socialization as a key adaptation strategy. Through platforms like InterNations an internet community service for expatriates, he participates in international meetups, language exchanges, and board game gatherings to connect with others in similar situations

Nour-eddine acknowledged his distinct appearance from the typical Czech citizen, believing that this made him easily identifiable as a foreigner. His approach to breaking the ice involved learning basic Czech phrases like 'Ahoy' and 'Prosim', which he used to make interactions with locals easier. The composition of his social circle was not dictated by nationality or background but by the ability to speak English. Although some Czech locals were part of his circle, he noted that their openness was likely due to their own experiences of living abroad. Nour-eddine expressed no intention to learn the Czech language, preferring to remain in his English-speaking world, which he referred to as his comfort zone. Like other participants, Nour-eddine raised concerns about healthcare access without proficiency in the local language, considering this a potential risk to his health.

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Azzedine, whom I found and reached out to through a Moroccan diaspora Facebook group, decided to move to Prague after meeting his wife, who shared his interest in art and introduced him to the potential of studying at a photography school in the city. He didn't research the country and culture before making the move, holding the belief that all places are essentially the same, or as he put it, *"God's earth is all green"*. His initial three months were spent like a tourist, enjoying the sights and new surroundings. However, he soon encountered the language barrier which he considers the biggest obstacle to adaptation. Azzedine's language skills were limited, with a basic understanding of French and English, which he self-assessed as being at 5%. He took the initiative to learn the basics of Czech at the Prague integration center.

He also noticed significant cultural differences, particularly in holidays and celebrations. He compared the ease and casual nature of forming connections and hanging out in Morocco to the more formal and planned social interactions with Czech people. He believes that working with Czechs can promote integration. His first job was at a theater which he found through his spouse, consisting of working with an all-Czech team. He later transitioned careers to a men's hair salon where he interacted with people of multiple nationalities.

Although Azzedine's wife had a demanding full-time job, she played a partial role in supporting his integration process. However, he received significant financial and emotional support from his mother-in-law, with whom he maintains a pleasant friendship. Being an English speaker and having lived abroad, she aided him in language learning. When it comes to social circles, Azzedine expressed an aversion to associating too much with Arabs, though he maintains close friendships with a Moroccan and an Algerian. He has had mixed experiences with Arabs,

feeling that some were ungrateful for the help he offered. His Algerian friend, fluent in the local language, was instrumental in teaching him how to communicate with clients.

Azzedine doesn't believe a large friend group is necessary for adaptation journey. Rather, it's about enjoying the environment, the weather, and the lifestyle of the city. He views himself as open-minded, participating in local customs even though he sometimes feels nervous in social gatherings due to his limited language proficiency. He recalls his initial job at the theater where he worked as a technician's assistant without understanding Czech. However, he managed to get by due to the routine nature of the work. He was initially hesitant to work at the hair salon because it was owned by a Tunisian, reflecting a common fear among Moroccans of mingling too much with their own people he says.

Despite acknowledging the better quality of life in Prague, Azzedine often fantasizes about life back in Morocco, where he maintains close relationships with family and friends. He has picked up some good habits in Prague that he would like to take back home. He, however, laments the quality of the food in Prague, specifically the meat, which he avoids for quality reasons, not religious ones.

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Similar to Nour-eddine, of his own volition Abdulrazzak reached out to me on Facebook after reading my post about the study. Abdulrazzak's narrative of migration and integration into Prague society is rich and multifaceted, reflecting a journey that began in 2001 when he met his future Czech wife during his work as a tour guide in Morocco. This relationship would lead him to a country that was not a common destination for his fellow Moroccans. Upon moving to the

Czech Republic, Abdulrazzak confronted a significant language barrier. Although he had an English Studies degree and teaching experience in Morocco, his Czech language skills were limited, this complicated his search for employment. To address this, he enrolled in an intensive three-week language course at Charles University's Albertov branch. The struggle with language continued in his first job in Prague, as a teacher in a school in New Town. This position, found by his wife in a local newspaper, provided an environment to develop his Czech language skills.

His early years in Prague were marked by cultural adjustments. Abdulrazzak noted a contrast between the individualistic tendencies of the Czech people and the communal nature of Moroccan society. He tried to bridge this cultural gap by introducing his colleagues at the school to his culture of sharing, a common practice in Morocco. Religion was another significant aspect of Abdulrazzak's integration story. As a practicing Muslim, he needed accommodations to observe religious practices such as the Dohr prayer and Eid celebrations, he mentioned that his request was met with openness from the headmaster of the school as long as it did not perturb his duties as a teacher.

*“I stayed there for almost 4 years. The headmaster and secretary were very nice people. That's where I started learning and understanding Czech culture, we had a common space that I shared with my colleagues, so multiple offices grouped in one place. I worked I think 25 hours a week, class started at 7 and ended at 3. Fridays I wanted to leave early for the prayer, I informed them that I would like to leave early and move the hours I missed to another time slot, and they had no issue with that. I also started learning Czech there, when I started the job I thought we would speak all the time because I was surrounded by english teachers but it was the opposite. I started to understand Czech society as well, people saying hi to you one day and ignoring you the next morning, not out of disrespect it's just in their nature. I remember this lady at the*



*reception would never say good morning back to me. Maybe you've noticed it yourself...She started saying good morning to me after I shared some sweets with her, and she became very friendly. With my colleagues as well, I noticed a lot of individuality, for example, if a person makes themselves something to drink they don't share, it's very different from Moroccan nature we share everything, You can't eat alone while someone is next to you. I used to make tea during breaks and I made it for everyone until it started rubbing off on them. So they would also make tea for everyone. After that, I enrolled in the masters to continue with my studies."*

Abdulrazzak pursued further academic advancement after leaving his teaching job, enrolling in a part-time Master's program at New York University in Prague. His career also took a turn as he showed an entrepreneurial spirit by buying a fast-food joint from a fellow Moroccan. This venture introduced him to more people within the Moroccan and Arab communities in Prague. Later, he diversified his work by exploring the tourism and real estate sectors, to gain experience he worked in a hotel in the old town to learn the ins and outs of tourist accommodations and hospitality. He then acquired apartments that he would rent through Booking and Airbnb. His improved language skills played a crucial role in this transition, making his daily life easier and enhancing his understanding of his surroundings.

However, he states that complete assimilation is impossible as Abdulrazzak often felt like 'the other,' a sentiment stemming from the Czech Republic's historical wariness of outsiders, as a matter of fact, Abdulrazzak is one of the few participants who delved deeply into the topic, offering a thought-provoking analysis of the perceived individualistic, cold, or distant nature of the Czechs. stating that it is most probably a result of their repeated history of oppression, citing Habsburg's rule over bohemian lands, the military occupation of Czechoslovakia by nazi Germany, and the state of the country under communist rule. To Abdulrazzak, this characteristic

likely stems from the nation's tumultuous history, marked by recurring challenges and upheavals. His insightful exploration sheds light on the complexities underlying this stereotype and prompted me to further reflect on how Moroccan nationals might view Czech people's cultural identity. *“Well, when it comes to adapting, assimilation will never happen, it is impossible because you are labeled as the other. First of all, this is not America or England, those places have diversity, and assimilation is possible to a certain extent. The Czech Republic is a small place in Europe, they have a long complicated history with outsiders, the Germans... actually Prague was always under the control of different powers, the Romans, the Habsburgs, the Austro-Hungarians, when did they get their autonomy? around 1918? Then the Czech Republic and Slovakia were separated in the 90s around 1992. That’s when the country became the Czech Republic. Well, the important part is, like I was saying, the nazis, the Russians especially secluded them, so for them the outsiders represent danger, you are either a Czech or a cizinec.”*

Despite this perception, he believes he is well-integrated, citing that his children are half Czech, his contributions to Czech society as a taxpayer, his Czech nationality, and his warm relations with his neighbors as evidence. Although he prefers to refer to them as acquaintances rather than friends, Abdulrazzak's social network is wide-ranging, extending to people he met at the local mosque, halal shops, and work settings. He stresses the importance of not isolating oneself within one's ethnic community, as it could hinder language learning and overall integration. Abdulrazzak’s story offers a detailed look at the migrant experience. His story showcases the balance between retaining cultural identity and integrating into a new society, the importance of language learning, and the role of personal determination and social support in navigating the path of migration and integration.

Abdulrazzak's interview stands out as one of the most detailed and lengthiest discussions I've conducted during my research. It lasted one hour and forty-two minutes offering an expansive exploration of his life as a Moroccan national living in Prague for an extended period of twenty-two years. The connection the participant made between the current societal behaviors in the Czech Republic towards foreigners and its historical past was an unexpected aspect of our discussion and it broadened the context of his experience. His unique perspective, integrating narratives, and personal anecdotes offered a rich understanding of his adaptation process in Prague.

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Another participant I found on the same Moroccan Facebook group is Mustapha, Mustapha's relocation to Prague at the age of thirty-two was a family matter, as he encountered a Slovak woman while he worked as a tour guide in Fez, Morocco. Their professional collaboration blossomed into a romantic relationship and ultimately led to marriage. Before permanently settling in Prague, Mustapha and his wife briefly resided with his family in the south of Morocco while navigating the paperwork and visa processes. Communication between Mustapha and his wife predominantly occurred in French and Arabic considering her knowledge of multiple languages. His first week in Prague proved challenging, as he had to independently manage the tasks of acclimating to the city and caring for their toddler while his wife worked full-time. Mustapha says that language barriers emerged as a prominent obstacle for him on a daily, with limited English proficiency among the local population and a lack of willingness to make linguistic concessions. Despite his limited English skills, Mustapha endeavored to

effectively communicate his needs using translation apps on his phone. Upon arrival, Mustapha attempted to secure employment, but the process was delayed due to the finalization of his residency paperwork. Eventually, his wife assisted in securing a job as a porter at the hotel where he currently works. Mustapha expresses satisfaction with the ease of finding employment and feeling accepted within his workplace. To effectively communicate with his coworkers and clients, who predominantly do not speak English, Mustapha recognized the necessity of putting effort into learning the local language. Mustapha attributes much of his successful adaptation to the support provided by his spouse, who facilitated his relocation, assisted in navigating the cultural and environmental changes, and utilized her contacts in the hotel industry to secure employment for him *“She played a pivotal part and she is still playing it now. Without her, I wouldn’t have stayed here for a year. Even if this does not count as a long period. She did help me find a mosque and places where to eat, what I forgot to mention is that she was the one that found me my current work, since she works in tourism she has contacts in a lot of hotels, it was thanks to her that I got the job so easily.”*

Although language proficiency is not mandatory within his work environment, his colleagues encourage him to learn the language, recognizing its potential benefits. Mustapha acknowledges that his future lies in Prague, as his daughter was born there, and he realizes the importance of learning the language to effectively engage with his surroundings and communicate with his child. Prior to his arrival in Prague, Mustapha had no preconceived notions about the Czech Republic. However, he experienced shock and difficulty in grappling with the intricacies of the local language, which he considers more challenging to acquire compared to English, French, Spanish, or Italian. Navigating public transportation posed another significant challenge for him. Gaining the trust of the local Czech population, including his wife,

proved to be arduous. Mustapha acknowledges the need to work diligently to integrate and form meaningful relationships within the Czech community. Mustapha's adaptation strategy revolved around finding employment and establishing a family routine with his wife and daughter. He underwent a cultural adjustment, taking on responsibilities typically associated with women in his background, such as cooking and caring for his child. Adhering to societal norms and adjusting his behavior to align with Czech expectations also presented a shift in his perspective.

His social circle primarily consists of Moroccans, initially comprising solely of his family and colleagues at work for eight months. A significant friendship formed through Instagram with a fellow Moroccan who had recently arrived in the Czech Republic, he introduced Mustapha to three additional Moroccans, who he now considers like family. Celebrating significant cultural events such as Ramadan and Eid together contributes to a sense of community and familiarity. While Mustapha expresses curiosity about forming lasting relationships with locals, he acknowledges the language barrier as a hindrance. Without proficiency in the local language, he believes it is challenging to establish genuine connections. However, he remains optimistic that improving his language skills will facilitate relationships in the future, he says he does not consider formal language classes necessary as his wife takes time to teach him the basics *“I do speak to my wife in Czech at home, she puts effort into teaching me. The last time she went to Morocco she got me a book for Czech Arabic learning. I used it and think it’s quite good, I learned words and vocabulary and noticed that with the help of this book I could speak a bit of Czech, not fluent of course but I would be able to converse. It’s effective because it’s in my mother tongue. My wife also puts effort into giving me a two-hour lesson once a week at home to teach me grammar. Since she is willing to help me at home I don’t think it’s necessary to take language courses. I also have my book, I just need to put effort into it.”*

Mustapha maintained a close relationship with his mother and sister, who provided support during his move. This family support from back home and his relationship with his spouse continues to have a positive impact on his adaptation process. Mustapha expressed his desire to keep evolving in order to build a comfortable life here, he is open to changing for the better while he continues being committed to his religious beliefs, family, and Moroccan identity.

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My encounter with Salma was facilitated through her husband, an acquaintance of Abdulrazzak's. Due to time constraints, it wasn't possible to conduct an interview with Salma's husband however valuable insights were gleaned from Salma's experiences and perspectives, contributing significantly to this research. Without a professional occupation, Salma and her family are essentially expatriates, traversing the globe due to her husband's job assignments. Prior to settling in Prague, they resided in South Korea, another posting of her husband's career. Their arrival in Prague coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of mandatory lockdowns. While they experienced a slow start in their new city, things improved gradually.

Salma, considers herself to be a seasoned expatriate, she has developed a knack for adaptation. Having lived in numerous foreign countries over the past decade, she has a solid perception of Europe and was expecting Prague to be similar to other European countries she had visited before. Moving to a new country for Salma and her family involves a series of prep rituals. They prioritize researching their next destination and, whenever possible, briefly visiting the country before making a permanent move. According to Salma, developing a clear vision of the upcoming location is essential for a smooth transition. Salma's social interactions are

somewhat limited due to her lack of a professional occupation. Her only significant connection with the local society is her son's school. However, even this link is not truly Czech in nature, as her son attends a French establishment, creating more interactions with French people than Czech. Salma's social circle mainly comprises fellow Moroccan ladies, a bond that was initially forged through a chance encounter at a park. Here, Salma was approached by another Moroccan woman who overheard her speak the Moroccan dialect to her son. This meeting led Salma to be included in a larger WhatsApp group composed of Moroccan ladies residing in Prague and elsewhere in the Czech Republic. This small but tightly-knit Moroccan community organizes group outings, and shared activities, and provides mutual assistance. She thinks group acts as an essential support system for the members, as they navigate the intricacies of living in a foreign country with a different culture *“There are not many Moroccans at the school, maybe not at all. But there are other nationalities, Egyptians, Algerians, and French. Regarding the group of Moroccan women I mentioned. I met this lady while she was playing with her son. She heard me talking to my son, she knew I was Moroccan and she was the one that introduced me to the Whatsapp group. She added me and honestly, it’s great they speak every day they help each other if someone doesn't know about something, it's great.”*

Apart from her connections within the Moroccan community, Salma has formed close friendships with one Egyptian and one Algerian friend. These interactions further expand her social circle, providing a semblance of home in an otherwise unfamiliar environment. It is within these circles that she has managed to maintain a sense of normalcy and cultural familiarity, which is important to her as she aims to preserve her Moroccan identity and traditions despite living abroad. Salma holds Prague in high esteem for its cleanliness and beauty, despite certain inconveniences. From her perspective, the people here are not particularly welcoming towards

foreigners, unlike her experience in South Korea where the locals were more helpful. She feels this lack of warmth extends from simple daily interactions like greetings to more serious encounters like her unfortunate experience with a neighbor *“Once, a neighbor had his dog while we were inside our car. He came to us. He wanted to play with us. In our culture, we Arabs don't like to touch dogs or be touched by dogs. And two years ago my son was 5 years old. He was scared and started screaming. The neighbor didn't like it. He said you are in a country where dogs are common, you have to get used to it, or else go back home. I had a family member with me, and she was wearing the veil, when he saw her, he started asking us where we live, and if we rent or own a house, he started asking us questions, and he called us terrorists because my family member was wearing the veil. He said you are terrorists. We said if we are terrorists, you are a racist and we're gonna call the police. It was his fault too. We were in our car and his dog came to us. It wasn't our fault. This is the only incident, and we meet him from time to time and always try to avoid him.”*

Language is another area of contention for Salma. She reasons that learning Czech would only be beneficial if they planned to stay for a long period. Compared to universally applicable languages like English or French, Czech has limited usability, thus she doesn't see a point in learning it. In contrast to Salma's reluctance to learn the local language, her son has successfully integrated into his school environment, showcasing a welcoming circle of friends. This positive experience has encouraged them to extend their stay in the Czech Republic. Despite living abroad, Salma insists on preserving the Moroccan culture within her household. She believes that many people tend to adopt the more liberal customs of their host country, including practices like drinking alcohol or smoking. However, she thinks such cultural assimilation often requires



language proficiency and a long stay in the country, which is very unlikely to happen to her and her family.

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Mohsin whom I got introduced to through a mutual friend, embarked on a journey to Prague over eight years ago. Initially, he arrived with the intention of studying the language, but as time passed, he discovered a deep connection to the city and decided to make it his long-term home. Mohsin's integration into Prague society has been a gradual process, marked by personal growth, a strong support network, and an open-minded approach to embracing both Czech and Moroccan cultures. Having spent four years pursuing his studies at the Czech University of Life Sciences, Mohsin relished the vibrant academic environment. Immersed in a range of projects and extracurricular activities, he formed close relationships with classmates and even bonded with teachers over shared interests such as organizing beer tastings. These experiences fostered a sense of belonging and helped him create a circle of friends that extended beyond the confines of the university. While Mohsin's integration has been relatively smooth, he acknowledges the initial challenges he faced during his first year. It was a period of self-imposed isolation, driven by shyness and apprehension about approaching new people. However, recognizing the importance of pushing past his comfort zone, he made a conscious effort to engage with the local community. Attending numerous events and social gatherings, he gradually built meaningful connections with people from various countries, including both locals and fellow expatriates.

Today, his circle of friends reflects the multicultural fabric of Prague, with individuals coming from diverse backgrounds. Language acquisition has played a significant role in

Mohsin's integration process. Although his command of Czech is not yet fluent, he has made noticeable progress in navigating everyday life and effectively communicating his needs. Early on, language barriers posed occasional challenges, particularly during a visit to the hospital when few English speakers were available. This experience underscored the importance of further improving his language skills, prompting him to prioritize Czech language learning. In terms of employment, Mohsin has successfully established himself as a full-time working professional in Prague, specializing in payroll analysis. The city's job market proved accessible, particularly for individuals fluent in English and another European language. However, administrative requirements and visa processes demanded attention during his early stages of securing employment.

Despite his commitment to integrating into Czech society, Mohsin has consciously maintained a strong connection to his Moroccan identity. Grounded in a multicultural family background, he cherishes his roots and values the experiences that shaped him. Striving for a harmonious blend of cultures, he actively preserves his Moroccan essence while embracing aspects of Czech culture and customs. This balance enables him to navigate between his two worlds, ensuring a sense of authenticity and self-identity. Looking to the future, Mohsin remains open to possibilities both within and beyond Prague. While he appreciates the quality of life the city offers, he acknowledges the growing concern surrounding the housing crisis and its impact on affordability. As a young professional, he weighs various factors, including job prospects and the financial landscape, when considering potential relocations. However, he expresses contentment with his current situation, viewing Prague as his second home and relishing the strong social connections he has formed “*Integration. It's a sort of a second home, creating a sort of a second home here. You don't feel you're... I personally don't feel that I'm a foreigner. I*

*can deal with things myself. I mean at the same time it requires, some little bit of... how to call it? Some hard work from my end as well. I cannot just be moving here and expect myself to adapt magically without doing some things from my side. So for example I can go to the foreign police where nobody speaks English and take the challenge and deal with it myself since my very first year. And after all these years I've never had the need to bring someone to help me with anything document-wise, banks, whatever it is. I deal with it. Language helps too. I barely speak but I can manage when I need to buy something, make a phone call. All of this helped me create a second home here. My circle in Prague, a circle is the best word I would say. My circle in Prague basically is much bigger than my circle back home currently.”*

When I asked Mohsin about what other Moroccan nationals should take into account before considering a move to Prague or any foreign land. His advice centered around proactive engagement with the local community, attending events, and seeking out resources that facilitate integration. Through his own experiences, he has discovered the transformative power of stepping outside one's comfort zone, fostering personal growth, and forming deep connections. Mohsin's story reflects the intricate process of adaptation, highlighting the importance of perseverance, an open mind, and a strong sense of self-identity when navigating a new cultural landscape.

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I came into contact with Hafsa through Mohsin. She's currently working for an international American company, and her move to Prague was driven by her career. Interestingly, she was originally contacted by a recruiter through LinkedIn for a position in Bratislava.

However, during her interview, she was given the choice to relocate to either Bratislava or Prague. Having previously visited both cities, she opted for Prague. Hafsa's choice was driven partly by a desire to overwrite a negative experience she had during a previous holiday in Prague. Upon moving, Hafsa initially faced some challenges, primarily due to the language barrier and the need to find accommodation without any assistance. However, she found that once the housing situation was resolved, other aspects of her life fell into place more easily. She quickly made connections with people she met through Facebook groups and started attending social events such as quiz nights organized by Facebook expat groups. She also found her team-building meetups with her colleagues to be significant in forming connections.

In terms of her social circle, she shares a close bond with a Moroccan and a Tunisian, and the rest of her friends are internationals. She emphasizes that nationality doesn't matter to her if she clicks with someone, that's all she needs. In fact, she cites her Moroccan and Tunisian friends as part of her support system here in Prague, as they share a common background and can understand her struggles. As she started her adaptation journey in Prague, Hafsa began learning the Czech language through her company to make her life easier and communicate better with locals. She notes that locals can become frustrated and rude when they can't communicate effectively in English, a stark contrast to the warmth and hospitality she was used to in Morocco

*“Yes, basically, because at work we have some kind of... How can I say it? It's not training, but the company can pay for you to learn the language. Even the language that you work with, so basically French or English, or the language of the country that you're living in. So basically for me, I choose Czech, so now I can say some words...especially, because it can be frustrating at the grocery store because normally they don't speak English, so it's frustrating for them to communicate with us, expats. I feel like I can make it easier for them, because I love languages, so why not learn the Czech language and make it easier?”* At her workplace, even though her Czech colleagues are fluent in English, she

felt they weren't open to her initially. *“I had some experience with Czech people, especially at work, they are not very open...I asked, especially people at my work, I was like, why are you not... Because normally in my work, everyone says good morning to everyone, because we have an open space, so basically expats always say good morning, hi, how are you, but when you are saying it to a Czech person, they don't even respond to you. And one time I asked, because we were just the only two, and I said good morning, and they didn't answer me, and I was like, I'm sorry, are you mad at me or something? But they said, yeah, Czech people are kind of shy to expats, they are not very open, and it's like their culture that they are not open to other people, and they are not comfortable being open with other people. But if you speak the language, it's easier for them. And mind you, those people speak perfect English at work.”*

However, she managed to befriend a Czech online who turned out to be incredibly helpful, assisting her in tasks like opening a bank account and speaking to her landlord. It is through experiences like this that she came to believe that Czech people can be kind once they open up to you.

In addition, she recalls her struggles with finding good food in Prague and how her network helped her overcome this, she would go out and try different restaurants with her colleague from work as a team-building activity. As for the future, Hafsa is contemplating a move to Paris where she would have a larger friend group and family. However, she is also open to staying in Prague given the progress she's made in language learning and social integration. It is worth mentioning that only a month prior to our interview, she discovered a small community of Moroccans in Prague and had the opportunity to meet them at an event, she expressed that she did not expect the Moroccan community here to be of that size.

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I contacted Jihane and asked for an interview after noticing her familiar Moroccan name on the Prague women's expat group which I am a member of, the Facebook group is dedicated to fostering connections among international women. Jihane moved to Prague two years ago as part of a job relocation program after the branch of the company she was working for in Morocco was closed due to the global impacts of COVID-19. She was given a choice between Prague and Dubai, ultimately choosing Prague due to her personal preferences and long-term prospects. Jihane admitted she had limited knowledge about Czech culture before moving, but did some research on her own. Her primary resources were YouTube videos and content made by American expats living here, which helped her understand the local culture and decide on which district to live in. Jihane didn't experience any major culture shock but was pleasantly surprised by the high number of pets in the city, noting that it would be heaven for her dog back in Morocco. The participant arrived in Prague after COVID-19 restrictions began to ease. She spent her first month living in a hotel in Vinohrady, mostly dealing with quarantine, biometrics, and other administrative matters. Though she attended Czech language classes provided by the Integration Center to aid her adjustment, her early experiences in Prague were somewhat isolating due to her work. Jihane manages the Middle East and Asian markets for her company, and most of her colleagues are not based in Prague, which limited her social interactions at the office. When I asked Jihane to recall the first few months in Prague, she stated that they were marked by strong connections with her family back in Morocco, especially because her husband was still living there. However, her father fell ill in June, and frequent trips back to Morocco combined with anxiety about her father's health led to a difficult period. Jihane began working with a therapist, who helped her identify and address her social anxiety. Encouraged by her therapist, Jihane slowly began to immerse herself in the local environment. She started to attend

events and connected with people who shared her interests, gradually building a social network in Prague. Through these efforts, she managed to form a few relationships that, while not yet deep friendships, have helped her feel more integrated into the community. Jihane's social circles in Prague are diverse, consisting mostly of expats from different nationalities like Ukraine, France, China, Portugal, and South Africa. These friendships were established primarily through expat events she attended. She specified that she hasn't focused much on making Czech friends or immersing herself in Czech culture. Jihane recognizes that her understanding of Czech culture is currently limited since she has been surrounding herself with expat women *“I have no idea. Because I guess I'm mostly connected with expats. But for me, Czech culture is mostly linked to the cuisine. For example, the fact that they don't have much variety of veggies. For me, Czech culture is eating meat and potatoes. It's stupid, but this is all I can capture. The law of pets, that's really something nice. Maybe that's because I didn't live elsewhere before. This is my first... Czechs. People say they're grumpy, but I don't know.”*

Jihane faced certain challenges after her relocation. She recounted an incident where a local bank denied her request to open an account over concerns about potential money transfers to terrorist organizations, an experience she regards as discriminatory. Healthcare has also been a challenge for her. Once, she experienced severe ear pain but struggled to get immediate medical attention because her general practitioner was unavailable, which forced her to seek help at a hospital. the language barrier posed a significant challenge for Jihane, especially when she needed medical attention at a hospital. The staff's limited English proficiency led to a stressful situation, which she navigated by translating her explanations from English to Czech using her phone. Despite the initial hardships, Jihane believes she built a supportive network in Prague. An instance of this was when she contracted COVID-19 and her friends offered to assist her with

food and medicine. Additionally, she connected with Moroccan women in Prague via a WhatsApp group, further expanding her social network. She occasionally interacts with them, especially during traditional celebrations like Ramadan. Jihane's approach to learning the Czech language is pragmatic. She completed an A1 course offered by the Integration Center Prague (ICP) but found the language complex and time-consuming to learn. Her decision to continue learning Czech depends on her plans for a long-term stay in the country, considering that the language has limited use outside of the Czech Republic. Throughout the interview, Jihane continued discussing her experiences with the language barrier and how it affects various aspects of her life in Prague. She is considering learning Czech to a B1 level to make navigating public services and emergencies easier. For instance, renewing her work permit or residence card and interacting with banks were challenges she faced due to her limited knowledge of Czech. She also reflects on how speaking Czech would enable a more profound understanding of the culture. However, Jihane also acknowledges the substantial time investment required for learning such a complex language. Jihane highlights some cultural changes she has adopted since moving to Prague. For instance, she now spends more time outdoors, a habit that wasn't common for her in Morocco. Additionally, due to the lack of a car and the widespread use of public transportation in Prague, she has adjusted her grocery shopping habits, refraining from stockpiling and instead buying only essential items. When asked about her long-term plans in Prague Jihane seemed uncertain. She says she likes the city but does not have a fixed plan yet. She has previously considered moving to Canada but notes that the lifestyle there differs from Europe. Jihane shares that her husband, also an engineer, did not move with her initially due to immigration restrictions on work eligibility, but they are considering joining her now. The future decision about staying longer term in Prague might be influenced by their plans to start a family. Jihane and her husband



prefer Prague over France, citing concerns about racism in France due to their Moroccan heritage. Jihane maintains strong ties with her family and friends back in Morocco, keeping in contact regularly, and sharing her new experiences in Prague. When reflecting on her identity as a Moroccan living in Prague, she shares that she's begun to recognize the multifaceted aspects of her identity that she didn't fully appreciate before moving, such as being Berber, Muslim, and Mediterranean. She recognizes some values and traits she associates with being Moroccan, such as helping others and being close to family, but questions how these will morph over time. In terms of cultural differences, she has observed that people in Prague may be less likely to help others in public situations, a behavior she attributes to cultural differences rather than a personal lack of kindness. However, she acknowledges that this may be a biased perception based on a few observed incidents. Jihane's advice to others moving to Prague, particularly if they're moving alone, is to connect with other expats. She explains that sharing the experience of discovery and acclimation with others in a similar situation is beneficial, during the interview she states

*“Connect with expats first, I guess. I think that it's really helpful to connect with expats. Because you get to discover the city together, basically. I think that would be my first piece of advice”.*

Despite her positive experiences in Prague, Jihane does note some minor inconveniences, particularly with the food options. She misses the variety and quality of certain foods she enjoyed in Morocco. Jihane's experiences in Prague have been generally positive, providing her with the opportunity for self-discovery and learning about a new culture. Her experiences have allowed her to reflect on her own identity, and build relationships with new communities. She is still undecided about her long-term plans, leaving the door open for future possibilities.

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Halima consented to an interview following her exposure to my message shared within the previously mentioned Moroccan women's WhatsApp group. I gained access to the group through the invitation of one of my other participants, Jihane, who added me as a member. Halima's journey to adapting to life in Prague after relocating from Morocco was a process filled with challenges, successes, and transformative experiences. She moved to Prague after meeting and marrying her husband, a Moroccan with Czech nationality. Upon joining her workplace, Halima found herself surrounded by a diverse group of colleagues, including both expats and Czech individuals. She actively engaged with her Czech coworkers, demonstrating a genuine curiosity about their culture, holidays, and daily routines. This initial interaction laid the foundation for building connections and fostering mutual interest in each other's backgrounds. During lunch breaks and team-building activities, Halima and her colleagues would spend time together, exchanging information and forming bonds that extended beyond the professional realm. Halima's husband, who had already been living in Prague for several years before her arrival, played a pivotal role in her adaptation process. In her first month in the city, he took a week off from work to accompany her on tram and metro rides, helping her navigate the public transportation system. This experience instilled in her a sense of independence and self-assurance, allowing her to venture out on her own without relying on others. Exploring different areas of the city together, and venturing out of Prague to visit other cities in the country, contributed to her growing attachment to the Czech Republic.

Language acquisition emerged as a significant factor in Halima's integration. Although she did not visit integration centers, she proactively pursued extensive language courses, investing in her ability to communicate effectively in Czech *"I took classes, extensive classes for*

*three months. I stopped then I took an extra three months. And I also went to language classes with the company I work for, I would go to improve and I am always trying to learn. I always pick up new words from my son, he's fluent in Czech and he always teaches me.*" This commitment to language learning enabled her to navigate daily tasks with greater ease, such as grocery shopping and healthcare visits. Halima noted that having at least a basic understanding of the language was essential, as it allowed her to connect with locals, demonstrate her efforts to engage, and elicit greater patience and support from those she interacted with. While Halima's journey was largely positive, she also encountered instances of unfair treatment and prejudice. In one distressing incident at a restaurant, a Czech man targeted her with xenophobic remarks, telling her to go back to her country. Despite the unwarranted attack, she remained composed, choosing not to respond out of concern for her young son's presence. However, the situation took a positive turn when another Czech man from a neighboring table intervened, firmly reminding the aggressor of the inappropriateness of his behavior. This act of solidarity was further reinforced by the participation of other women in the conversation, who supported Halima and informed the aggressor that they would involve the authorities if necessary. This mixed experience left Halima feeling both protected and shaken. In terms of her family life, Halima emphasized the importance of preserving her Moroccan identity while embracing the Czech culture. She spoke Moroccan Arabic with her son at home, ensuring he remained connected to his heritage. However, she recognized the significance of exposing him to Czech customs and celebrations as well. By celebrating Czech holidays and participating in school activities, Halima aimed to facilitate her son's integration and foster a sense of belonging in his new environment. This delicate balance allowed her son to navigate both cultures with understanding and respect.

Throughout her adaptation journey, Halima highlighted the significance of language proficiency as a key factor in successful integration. While Czech society provided opportunities to connect with fellow Moroccans and expats through platforms like WhatsApp groups, she believed that acquiring a basic understanding of the local language was crucial. This extended beyond mere communication convenience, as it facilitated interactions with healthcare professionals, educators, and the broader community “...*That’s what I do with Moroccans that recently come here, the advice I give them is to learn the language, once you learn the language everything becomes easier. If you don’t speak the language everything will be difficult, starting from the grocery store, they will be lost with food items, and you don’t know what they are, the key to having a good life here in the Czech Republic is to have a language base.*” Speaking Czech demonstrated her commitment to embracing the local culture and aided in accessing various services.

In terms of maintaining her Moroccan identity while raising her son in Prague, Halima struck a balance between both cultures. She spoke Moroccan Arabic at home, ensuring her son remained connected to his heritage. Additionally, she celebrated both Czech and Moroccan customs, recognizing the significance of each and fostering an understanding of different cultures within her family. Halima also instilled in her son the values of respect and acceptance, teaching him to embrace diversity and appreciate the positive aspects of both cultures. Reflecting on her personal growth since moving to Prague, Halima acknowledged undergoing significant changes in her outlook and priorities. Previously, she placed great emphasis on material possessions and appearances. However, she underwent a transformative shift in her values and priorities, moving away from materialistic concerns and embracing simplicity. The experience of observing Czech workers' self-discipline and responsibility influenced her own work ethic, fostering a sense of

personal responsibility and motivation. Halima also recognized her role in portraying a positive image of Moroccans to the Czech community, aiming to facilitate the integration process for others from her background. Halima's adaptation to life in Prague involved actively engaging with the local culture, building meaningful relationships with locals, internationals, and her own kin, embracing language learning, and finding a delicate balance between her Moroccan identity and the Czech environment. Her journey highlights the significance of mutual respect, open-mindedness, and the willingness to embrace new experiences in navigating the challenges and opportunities of living in a foreign country.

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Naoual was introduced to me by Halima, who kindly provided me with Naoual's contact information after she agreed to participate in the study. Both Halima and Naoual are members of the female-exclusive WhatsApp group. Naoual's journey to Prague began with her marriage to a Moroccan man who had been living in the Czech Republic for an extended period. Naoual initially conducted basic research about Prague before her move, but she had limited expectations due to her lack of personal connections in the city. The first week and month in Prague were marked by language barriers, particularly with the older generation. However, Naoual found Prague to be a tourist-friendly city similar to her hometown Marrakesh and expressed her initial liking for the environment. To facilitate her adaptation, Naoual actively engaged in building social networks. She connected with other Moroccan expatriates and immigrants through her husband's acquaintances and joined social media groups. These connections provided her with practical support, cultural guidance, and opportunities for social

interactions. Naoual emphasized the importance of language learning in her adaptation process. She initially took language classes and later attended the integration center's extensive courses, where she further improved her Czech language skills. However, she noted that real language practice and vocabulary acquisition occurred through interactions with native Czech speakers, both at work and in her social circles. Naoual's social network consists of Moroccan, Syrian, Tunisian, and Czech friends. These friendships played a crucial role in her adaptation, providing emotional support and enriching her cultural experiences. The Moroccan community, in particular, filled the void of being away from her family and provided a sense of belonging. Employment played a significant role in Naoual's adaptation process. She initially faced difficulties due to the language barrier but eventually found work in an exchange office. Her interactions with both locals and tourists in the workplace further contributed to her goal of language fluency. Naoual expressed her contentment with her job and considers it not only as a means of earning a living but also as an avenue for social interaction and cultural immersion. Naoual's journey to adaptation in Prague showcases her ability to respect and embrace Czech culture while maintaining her religious beliefs. She navigates the cultural landscape by selectively adopting aspects of the local culture that align with her values and customs. One notable example is Naoual's inclusion of Czech traditions, such as celebrating Christmas, to ensure her children feel a sense of belonging and familiarity in their school environment. She recognizes the importance of cultural integration and the impact it has on her children's social interactions and sense of identity. By participating in these traditions, Naoual demonstrates her respect for the Czech culture and the value she places on her children's integration into the local community at school. At the same time, Naoual remains steadfast in preserving her religious beliefs and practices. She differentiates between cultural traditions and religious principles,

ensuring her children understand the distinction. For instance, she explains that consuming pork, which is a common practice in Czech cuisine, goes against her religious beliefs, and she instills this understanding in her children. Naoual's ability to strike a balance between cultural adaptation and religious adherence exemplifies her respect for both the Czech culture and her faith. She actively engages with the local culture while preserving and nurturing her own religious traditions. This demonstrates her adaptability and open-mindedness, allowing her to integrate into Czech society without compromising her religious identity. Naoual's approach showcases a harmonious coexistence between her respect for Czech culture and her commitment to her faith. Her ability to navigate the intersection of culture and religion serves as an example of how individuals can adapt to a new cultural environment while remaining true to their core values and beliefs.

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I initiated contact with Larbi by reaching out to him through the Facebook diaspora group. He relocated to Prague to be with his then-partner, now spouse. Before moving to Prague, Larbi had lived in a small village in Morocco and later moved to Turkey for his university studies. His decision to move to Prague was influenced by his partner, who already had a job in the city. Consequently, Larbi had to secure employment in the same location to join her permanently. After impressing a company during his interview, they decided to hire him and even facilitated his relocation and immigration process from Turkey. He remains employed with the same company to date. Larbi, in his own words, describes himself as lucky for having his Slovak girlfriend in Prague, whom he considers a strong support system. He acknowledges that

housing is typically the first challenge faced by non-European individuals relocating to Prague, but he was fortunate to avoid that hurdle. Larbi expresses his deep admiration for the city and its diversity. During his adjustment process, he emphasized the significant role his company played in bureaucratic matters. In addition, he found multiple introductions at work beneficial, leading to lasting friendships. Amongst his friends, Larbi has several Moroccans close friends in Prague, As he puts it *"We Moroccans look for each other."* He also maintains relationships with a broad group of expatriates. Larbi underscores his ability to adapt and blend in wherever he goes as a crucial skill he acquired when he left Morocco. To form connections and friendships, Larbi was open to participating in any required activities. He noted the typical Czech person can seem reserved, so it's essential to take the initiative and make them feel like you're genuinely seeking their friendship. Despite not consuming alcohol, Larbi didn't let that deter him from socializing with his work colleagues. He understood the importance of social settings in forming friendships with locals, though he didn't see having local friends as a requirement for adjusting to life in Prague. One of Larbi's regrets was not making more effort to learn the language. He participated in language courses provided by the company but found it challenging to balance work, entertainment, and night classes. He relied on what he referred to as *"language survival sentences"* to get by. Initially, interviewing Larbi seemed impossible as he had moved to Dubai after five years in Prague. However, I was able to connect with Larbi after finding his profile in the diaspora group where I was seeking participants. He shared several contacts, including Mona, with whom he formed a friendship after managing her at the Prague office of their workplace. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to meet and interview Larbi when he came back to Prague for a short vacation. This act further demonstrated his attachment to Prague, a city he now considers home.



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Mouna, who I got to know through Larbi, hails from a northern city in Morocco. Her journey brought her to Spain for her studies and then a tour through South America, before landing an internship opportunity in Prague. She recalls her initial period here as particularly challenging, living out of hostels and a suitcase, and struggling with the instability of her employment. She faced difficulties securing a flat, with landlords expressing a preference for Czech-speaking tenants. In her own words, It was a period of survival for her until she could stabilize her work situation and secure her employee card. Her initial attempts at forming local connections were hampered by the language barrier, and she found communication with Czech locals challenging compared to her experiences in Morocco and Spain. The transient nature of her early days in Prague also made it difficult for her to maintain stable relationships. However, once she settled into her new job, her situation improved and she was able to form her first Czech friendship. Currently, her circle of friends is multicultural, encompassing expats from various nationalities. While she values these connections, she feels a deeper, unfiltered connection with her fellow Moroccans. She reflects on the cultural differences she noticed, such as the Czech's affinity for beer drinking and pork, and the limited food options compared to her homeland. These cultural elements, she admits, she was unwilling to adapt merely for acceptance. Mouna notes her sympathy for the locals, given that Prague is home to a high percentage of expats, leading to a sense of cultural neglect. She feels the Czech language and culture are often overlooked in favor of other cultures, akin to a form of colonization. Despite this, she recognizes the need to learn Czech for her permanent residency, though on a day-to-day

basis, she relies heavily on Google Translate and friends for administrative tasks. Mouna acknowledges that she chose Prague for its life conditions rather than its culture. She appreciates the city's bubble-like aspect, where she can create her own comfortable environment. She tries to guard herself against social pressure, acknowledging the human desire for acceptance. This was exemplified when she faced a conflict between a religious holiday and a friend's birthday party. One person who has played a significant role in her Prague journey is Larbi, who was her manager at her second job. Being both Moroccan, they shared a common cultural understanding, and Larbi's support was instrumental in her adaptation process. Now, they maintain a strong friendship, underscoring the importance of shared cultural bonds in her Prague experience.

## Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

In accordance with Charmaz's constructivist approach to grounded theory research and analysis (2006), my data analysis began with the first interview and proceeded according to the inherent interplay between objectivity and inter-subjectivity in qualitative research, recognizing that cultural context influences the outcome and that data and theories are not discovered as objective entities within the data or analysis; instead, as a researcher I was an active participant embedded in the world I studied, shaping the data I collected and the analysis I produced. My data analysis began with immersion in the whole data unit which is the transcription of the interviews, I then coded each interview and transformed raw data into words and sometimes phrases that captured the meaning of the data unit at a conceptual level and allowed for the derivation of key categories and themes. Given the objective of the study, special attention was given to the "strategies" and "challenges" that were mentioned during the interviews while participants described their process of adaptation. After thorough reading and open coding, it was imperative to compare codes to identify the relationship within and then between each

interview. As I reach the point of saturation, the culmination of my in-depth analysis, a captivating narrative emerges. This narrative weaves together the intricate interrelations between the identified themes and codes, offering a vivid portrayal that encapsulates the very essence of the participant's experiences.

The interview questions employed in the data collection phase served a dual purpose: to explore the circumstances surrounding the participants' relocation and to gain insights into the transformations that occurred as a result of their immigration or relocation experience. The inquiries encompassed various aspects such as family dynamics, occupational status, language proficiency, future aspirations, interactions with residents and fellow Moroccan migrants, as well as any perceived shifts in their sense of identity. Additionally, participants were encouraged to reflect on personal growth and provide valuable advice based on their adaptation journey, which could be shared with future Moroccan nationals considering a move to Prague.

During the early stage of the analysis process, I was aware that it was not possible to form a theory that would universally apply to every single Moroccan national residing in Prague. However, it was crucial to recognize the inherent diversity within the participant pool and the unique experiences they shared. Rather than refraining from generalizations, the focus of my qualitative study was to highlight the aspects that were important within this specific group. By delving into their narratives and examining common patterns and themes, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the experiences and adaptation processes of Moroccan nationals in Prague. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of generalizability and instead focus on the richness and depth of individual experiences within the participant pool without claiming to represent the entire population.

The participant's motive for relocation serves as a fundamental determinant that sets the stage for the subsequent experiences they encounter, it acts as a decisive factor that shapes the narrative of their adaptation process in Prague. The motive of relocation significantly influences the initial environment in which individuals find themselves upon their arrival in Prague. The reason behind their decision to relocate plays a crucial role in determining the specific context, social dynamics, and opportunities they encounter. This motive serves as a guiding force that directs individuals towards certain occupational sectors, educational programs, or personal relationships, thereby shaping the environments they are immersed in from the outset.

The motive of relocation acts as a filter through which individuals navigate their new surroundings. Some participants have chosen to move to Prague to advance their careers, seeking better professional opportunities and growth. These participants often find themselves within international companies or industries with a global scope. This exposes them to a multicultural work environment and provides opportunities to connect with fellow expatriates or individuals from diverse backgrounds. Others have relocated for educational purposes, enrolling in programs or courses that align with their academic goals. Those who relocated for personal reasons like family or kinship may establish connections within the local communities, educational institutions, or social networks that align with their familial priorities.

It is important to note that the participants' occupations have a direct impact on the languages they use in their daily lives and the social groups they integrate into. Depending on their work environment, participants may primarily communicate in English and sometimes French if they are employed in international companies or if they have colleagues from different countries where the primary common language is English, as this is the basis for their employment in the first place. This can create an expat or multinational bubble where English is

the predominant language of interaction. On the other hand, participants in specific industries or local businesses may find themselves using Czech as the primary language of communication, particularly when interacting with colleagues or clients who are native Czech speakers. The same applies to the participants whose main occupation is student, the choice of study program for student participants will determine the language of instruction and the academic community they become a part of. If they enroll in English-taught programs, for example, they are more likely to interact with fellow students who also speak English and may have a similar international background. The occupational context shapes the participant's linguistic environment and can determine whether they predominantly use English, Czech, Moroccan Arabic, or a combination of languages in their work and social lives.

The notion of embarking on a “journey of adaptation” resonated with the participants as they recounted and deliberated on the strategies they employed to navigate the challenges encountered on their path toward establishing Prague as their long-term or temporary residence. While the participants had no issue with recognizing that they went through a process of change, for most of them change in no way means a permanent rupture with their country of origin or a loss of identity as Moroccans. They rather reported that the change lies in their daily habits, and is sometimes opposed to the ways they employed while living in their homeland. The participants accepted and rejected practices of the host society that they deemed compatible or incompatible with their perceived sense of cultural integrity and identification, what one of them refers to as “drawing a line between useful and unuseful values”. The participants recognized that staying stagnant and resisting change would hinder their progress in adapting to their new environment. While they emphasized the importance of staying true to their values and

principles, they also expressed a willingness to step out of their comfort zones and engage with the locals and internationals to foster mutual understanding and facilitate adaptation.

According to Ann Swidler (1986), cultural repertoire refers to the collection of cultural tools, symbols, practices, and meanings that individuals possess and draw upon in their everyday lives. It encompasses the range of ideas, beliefs, values, norms, and practices that are available to individuals within a particular cultural context. The cultural repertoire provides individuals with resources and frameworks for interpreting and navigating social interactions, shaping their behaviors, and making sense of the world around them. With this understanding of cultural repertoire, we can analyze how individuals respond to the case of immigration or relocation. Such circumstances present an interesting context to observe how a person's cultural repertoire may undergo changes or persist. These changes or persistence occur in response to new patterns of relationships between social actors in an unfamiliar environment.

Some participants in my study affirm the need to adapt and learn new approaches to organizing individual and collective actions, In contrast, other participants feel that they did not need to adopt new patterns of action. While the participants' behaviors and values continue to be influenced by their culture of origin, The participants in the study demonstrated a willingness to engage in activities that were not commonly part of their own culture, showing their adaptability and open-mindedness in their new environment. This choice to take from the new culture is of course subject to conditions. For students and young professionals, this often involved participating in social activities where alcohol was served, such as going to pubs and bars, which were typical places of social gathering for their peers. Despite personal beliefs or religious practices, some participants acknowledged the importance of bonding with their classmates or

colleagues and were willing to accompany them to such activities, even if they chose not to consume alcohol themselves.

For the participants who fulfill the role of mothers, their willingness to embrace certain cultural practices was motivated by their desire to ensure their children felt included at school. This meant putting up decorations and exchanging gifts during Christmas, even though it was not a tradition they practiced in their own culture. By participating in these harmless celebrations, they sought to create a sense of belonging for their children and help them integrate into the school environment where such customs were observed. In addition to participating in Christmas celebrations with their children, the mothers in the study took the opportunity to explain to their kids that this tradition was not part of their religious beliefs. They emphasized that it was a fun and inclusive activity for them to engage in, allowing their children to join their classmates in discussing and sharing experiences related to Christmas. By providing this context, the mothers ensured that their children understood the cultural significance of the tradition while maintaining a strong connection to their own religious identity. This approach allowed the children to navigate their multicultural environment with a sense of understanding and respect for different customs and beliefs.

On the topic of adaptability, it is noteworthy to highlight that participants expressed admiration for certain facets of Czech society, which they perceived as embodying qualities of orderliness and reserve. They mentioned the orderly manner in which people waited for and boarded public transportation, as well as the Czech people's tendency to mind their own business and maintain personal boundaries. In contrast to their experiences in Morocco, where social interactions may be more overt and communal, the participants appreciated the calm and respectful behavior they observed in Czech society.

The cited examples demonstrate the participants' discerning approach to acculturation, wherein they display selectivity in integrating elements of the host culture. This observation resonates with Berry's concept of biculturalism (integration), wherein individuals actively engage in the process of balancing and blending their original culture with aspects of the new culture. The participants' conscious choices and preferences indicate their inclination towards a nuanced and personalized form of acculturation, where they strategically navigate and adopt certain cultural practices while preserving their cultural identity. This selectivity could also be interpreted as a barrier to assimilation because of the participant's insistence on maintaining cultural traditions.

The interaction between Moroccan nationals and Prague society revealed a prominent awareness among the participants regarding the noticeable distinctions between their cultural background and the environment they now inhabit. Regardless of the duration or purpose of their relocation, all participants were prompt in acknowledging the noticeable shift in the societal dynamics surrounding them. Specifically, they highlighted and complained about the perceived coldness, individualistic nature, and distant behavior of the locals, contrasting it with the warmth and collectivist orientation typically associated with Moroccans. This initial cultural shock significantly influenced their approach to adapting to Prague, shaping their perception of the locals and their attitudes toward them. Some participants refer to this difference in attitude and approach to social interaction as “*typical Czech*”; they acknowledged the challenges of integrating into an already established social circle comprised of local Czech individuals. They also expressed frustration and weariness when multiple of their attempts amounted to poor results when they tried to overcome the initial barriers posed by the perceived cold nature of the Czechs.



On the other hand, some participants view the perceived coldness of the Czech people as a characteristic and inherent aspect of the country's cultural profile. They recognize it as a distinct cultural trait rather than a personal rejection, and they approach it with acceptance and understanding. Alarbi said *“We all have to accept the fact that like every, I'm not going to call them nationality, but every region that exists in the world, they have a people profile, right? So even if we take our own country, if you go more to the South, you find more conservative people, more in the middle, more open-minded, more north, European mentality, right? So similar to here. Maybe you may say it's hard to crack. Maybe they open up the moment they go to Pivular to drink. And then they became very friendly the way that we found our Mediterranean friends, right? You know what I mean? So it's just a different profile. I would not label it as close or open, but I would think of it in a way that, okay, it's like if you are having a problem-solving mindset, you are always like, hmm, I need to crack that puzzle. You know what I mean? So I actually have friends that like they are silent all day. The moment they have a beer, then they are the funniest people in the world”*.

A captivating insight voiced by certain participants pertains to their perception of a prevailing sense of discontent or signs of melancholy among the locals. This interpretation of the locals' emotional state adds insight into the participants' social interactions and how they interpret the emotions and demeanors of the people around them. Many of the participants in the study made intriguing attempts to explain their perception of coldness amongst the locals in Prague. Some of them suggested that historical events such as the long period of political and social oppression that the Czechs experienced, may have had a lasting effect on the collective psyche of the nation. They hypothesized that these historical factors might contribute to the reserved and seemingly unhappy demeanor observed among the locals. These explanations

reflect a healthy attempt to understand and interpret the emotional climate in Prague from a historical and cultural perspective. While these theories are of course speculative and subjective, they demonstrate the participants' engagement with the local context and their effort to find meaning in the behaviors and emotions they observed. Each participant illustrated the difference between Moroccan and Czech society by making a direct connection between the way of life in their country of origin and their personalities. They attributed their warmth, collectivist mindset, and tendency to establish close relationships to their Moroccan roots.

There is a noticeable disparity in the level of adaptation and the efforts invested, which directly correlates with the participants' age, occupation, and length of stay in Prague. Despite all participants having regular contact with the Czech society, the nature and extent of this contact varied. The young professionals in the participant pool, who typically work in international companies or industries where English is the primary language of communication, exhibited a particular pattern in their adaptation process. Their proficiency in English allows them to remain within the "expat bubble", where they interact predominantly with English-speaking coworkers and young Czech and Moroccan individuals who also have a good command of English. Their adaptation efforts often revolve around forming relationships with colleagues and joining expat-oriented social media platforms and groups, such as Meetup, InterNations, HelloTalk, and Facebook communities. They describe their social circles as predominantly international English speakers.

Similarly, participants who are currently pursuing education or had pursued education when they first arrived in the Czech Republic tend to have a broader social reach that extends to other international students. This multicultural and multinational environment provides them with a sense of comfort and facilitates connections with peers who share similar experiences.

Several participants expressed that it was easier for them to connect with fellow foreigners, as they are going through the same process or facing similar challenges. Conversely, establishing connections with locals required more effort, often due to their cautious nature or the difficulty of penetrating established social circles and the length of time that takes to build meaningful relationships. Nonetheless, some of the younger participants felt compelled to forge relationships with Czech individuals, considering it as a necessary itch that needed to be scratched. Acquiring one or two Czech friends was seen as sufficient in their quest for contact with the locals since *“there was no need for more local friends”* as one of the participants stated.

One notable aspect shared by the young professionals interviewed in the study is their future relocation plans. While they actively cultivate social circles in Prague for the time being, they view the city as a temporary home. Many of them express intentions to move to other European countries with more favorable immigration policies or English-speaking countries that offer better opportunities career-wise.

Within a distinct subset of participants who did not relocate to Prague for job positions or programs that require English proficiency, a noticeable pattern emerged. Particularly among those with longer periods of stay in Prague. They highlighted the significant impact of learning the Czech language on their overall quality of life and successful adaptation. And they view it as a nonnegotiable step that you have to go through if you want your adaptation here to be smooth. These individuals recognized the necessity of acquiring Czech language skills to understand and navigate their surroundings more effectively. All the parents in the participant pool, excluding Salma, emphasized the importance of learning Czech, even if not achieving fluency in the early stages, as a key factor in their adaptation process. To overcome the language barrier, these participants pursued various avenues to learn Czech. they enrolled in paid language courses upon

their arrival, while also taking advantage of extensive language programs offered by the Prague Integration Center for Foreign Nationals at later stages of their stay in Prague. Additionally, for those who had Czech or Slovak spouses, their partners played a crucial role in supporting and facilitating their language learning journey, although they describe it as a slow process considering the difficulty of the language. They found that their command of Czech became essential not only for daily interactions but also for vital communication with their children's schools and teachers. Mothers also note that learning the language made their domestic life easier since they came to understand what they were buying during shopping trips. These individuals viewed learning Czech as a non-negotiable aspect of settling into family life in Prague. They recognized that effective communication in the local language was not only useful but also mandatory in certain situations.

The participants who can be categorized as long-term immigrants have a stronger incentive to learn the Czech language, as they intend to establish their lives here permanently. They recognize that fluency in the language is key for effective communication, integration into the local community, and broadening their reach in employment, and social connections.

Halima emphasized the pivotal role of language learning in facilitating her adaptation, expressing the following sentiment: *“Just like I told you, a piece of advice for people that will live here or will be raising their families here in Prague, before having children you must learn the basics of the language, in hospitals, even if they speak a little English, you will feel better if you speak a bit of the language, even if you don't understand everything. When your child goes to kindergarten, you will integrate better with the moms, speaking a little Czech will even help your child in their integration process. I am against people that decide to have children in a country while they speak not one word of the language. Czechs are in their own country, we*

*should be the ones that make the extra effort to learn the language, it will help anyone find a job, majority of the people that have issues here are the ones that speak no Czech, women sometimes need their husband to go with them everywhere, life right now is very difficult one person can't be doing everything. Czechs are not evil when you get to know them, even now when I go to my son's teacher and ask for simplifications she always obliges."*

Naoual echoed a similar sentiment, as articulated in her own words: *"The main thing for people that want to settle here is to learn the language. I ask a lot of the women that I meet if they intend to stay and build a life here, if it's a yes I immediately advise them to go learn the language. There are places where you can learn Czech for free now. If they don't intend to stay for long, they can get by with a little English or whatever, because it's a waste of time to learn the language since you won't be able to use it outside of the Czech Republic. So yes, learning the language is essential. I sometimes get annoyed when people tell me they can't get used to it here, this place is very homey, I don't understand them or what they're looking for. So yes, language is everything, you don't need to be fluent, just be able to communicate and convey meaning. From my personal experience, Czechs are patient, they try to simplify speech and listen carefully especially if you tell them you don't understand. This is my personal experience, other people might have lived it differently. When I was pregnant, I had a wonderful experience at the hospital. The treatment was excellent. Some people had negative experiences and were treated poorly, so I am speaking about myself and how I lived it. Again, language is everything. When I was pregnant I spoke no Czech and that was an obstacle when communicating with my doctor or nurse, I had to use my phone and make them speak to another person so I would understand what was going on."*

The participants who have established family lives in Prague exhibit a different attachment style compared to expats. They view Prague not as a temporary residence, but as a permanent home where they envision a future with their families. For them, the city represents stability, a place to settle down and build a life together. Their attachment to Prague is deeply rooted in their family connections and the sense of belonging they have established over time. They prioritize creating a nurturing and supportive environment for their children, emphasizing the importance of adapting to the local community. These participants are more invested in long-term integration, seeking meaningful relationships with both locals and other Moroccan families. Their goals extend beyond professional aspirations, focusing on building a strong foundation for their families in their adopted city.

The remainder of the participant pool exhibits diverse perspectives and approaches regarding the correlation between language learning and adaptation. Various viewpoints and opinions emerged. Despite acknowledging the usefulness and importance of learning Czech for smoother integration into the majority society, some respondents candidly admit that they do not intend to attain fluency in the language. Their rationale stems from perceiving Czech as a complex language with limited practicality outside the country. This perception reinforces their transient mindset, as their priority lies in gaining professional experience in Prague before seeking a better quality of life elsewhere. They express contentment with their current lives within the expat bubble, surrounded by English-speaking individuals or fellow Moroccan Arabic speakers from their home country. They also rely on the increasing number of Czechs from the younger generation who are fluent in English. One of the participants conveyed his perspective on the matter by stating *“I think definitely it makes a bit of difference. But I wouldn't say it's a significant difference. Because in most of what I do or the experience here, everything else in*

*Prague is pretty much filled with a lot of expats. A lot of English speakers, newer generation also speaks pretty good English. So I didn't find much of a problem. I would say it is definitely a barrier to a certain extent. For example, I work in a Czech-speaking company. Mostly everyone is speaking Czech. Although everyone speaks English as well and we communicate pretty well. I kind of feel that I could also contribute more to some conversations if I was speaking Czech. But also one of the advantages of the company I work in is that it's mostly done over Slack, for example."*

While they recognize the value of knowing a few survival phrases in getting them by on a day-to-day basis they view the language learning process as time-consuming and potentially futile, given their anticipated shorter stays in the Czech Republic. These participants exhibit a pragmatic approach to their stay in Prague, considering it as a stepping stone rather than a long-term destination. Their focus on acquiring professional experience and maximizing opportunities for personal growth aligns with their aspirations to eventually settle in countries that offer greater prospects and potential for their careers and lifestyles.

Several participants, namely Samia, Hafsa, and Jihane, displayed a more open attitude toward language acquisition. While they did not express an immediate commitment to becoming fluent in Czech, they acknowledged the value of acquiring basic language skills. They were receptive to the idea of enrolling in language classes provided by their respective companies or taking advantage of language courses offered by the Prague integration center. This willingness to engage in language learning activities suggests their recognition of the potential benefits of acquiring a foundational understanding of the local language for enhancing their overall adaptation experience.

Jihane explains her perspective, stating, *"Learning Czech, if it were easy... If it was Spanish or something, I would have done it for sure already. But it's so complicated. I stopped at A1 just with this course that I said was provided by ICP. But now learning it is a real decision to take. Because it's tough, it will be time-consuming. It's not really usable elsewhere outside of the Czech Republic. So I need to decide first if I am staying longer if I am planning to stay here for life or for 10 years or 5 years or whatever. Then yes, I think if I do take that decision, I would definitely put more effort into learning the language. At least the B1 that is required for the PR and also to be sure that if you need to go to the hospital or to rush to the police station or whatever, you would be heard, understood, and for you as well to understand. But other than that, I am not really interested. It's so much trouble. It is a hard language."*

The participants who exhibit reluctance towards learning the local language leverage the favorable linguistic environment of Prague, characterized by widespread English proficiency due to its status as a tourist hub and home to a significant expatriate community. They capitalize on the prevalence of English as a widely spoken language, relying on it for their daily interactions and navigating various aspects of their lives. This reliance on English aligns with their personal preferences and perceived convenience, allowing them to comfortably navigate their surroundings without feeling an immediate necessity to prioritize Czech language acquisition.

Participants who had initially been hesitant to learn the language eventually came to recognize the tangible disadvantages and potential risks associated with their limited linguistic proficiency. Multiple participants shared poignant stories of challenging experiences at hospitals, where they struggled to convey their pains and ailments to Czech-speaking staff. These encounters became pivotal moments, prompting a profound reassessment of their stance on language acquisition. Interestingly, while some individuals added this inconvenience to their list



of reasons for considering relocation, others saw it as a powerful motivation to prioritize learning the language.

The participants in the study have diverse family dynamics, with some individuals relocating alone and others moving with their families. For those who relocated with their families, the family dynamic played a significant role in their adaptation process and shaped their experiences in Prague. Participants who relocated for a partner or a spouse report the support they received as a safety net. Participants who relocated for the sake of a partner or marriage experienced the advantages of an existing social network, which proved instrumental in navigating the uncertainties and challenges inherent in the process of relocation. This pre-established support system provided them with a valuable resource to cope with the changes and adjustments associated with their new environment.

In particular, participants who are married to Czech or Slovak spouses faced a unique set of circumstances. Their spouse's cultural background and familiarity with the local context provided them with a valuable support system and a bridge to Czech society. These participants often relied on their spouse's knowledge of the language, customs, and social networks to navigate their new environment. The presence of a Czech or Slovak spouse facilitated their integration into the local community, as they were introduced to family, friends, and social circles through their partner. The intercultural dynamics within these marriages also influenced the participants' adaptation process. The participants navigated the complexities of blending their cultural backgrounds with their spouses, often resulting in a fusion of traditions and practices. This intercultural exchange created a unique environment within their families, where different languages, customs, and beliefs coexisted. Participants mentioned the importance of maintaining a balance between their Moroccan heritage and their spouse's Czech or Slovak heritage, ensuring

that both cultural identities were recognized and celebrated. The participants that relocated with spouses of Moroccan nationality also report having received extensive social support from their partners upon their arrival. They recall being introduced to fellow Moroccan families and Czech acquaintances.

Furthermore, for participants with children, the family dynamic played a central role in their adaptation process. The participants emphasized the significance of creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for their children, where they could cultivate a sense of belonging and cultural identity. They sought opportunities to engage their children in activities that reflected both their Moroccan and Czech backgrounds, fostering a sense of connection to both cultures. This included participating in celebrations of religious holidays, and cultural events, and maintaining connections with the Moroccan community in Prague. By incorporating elements from both cultures into their family life, these participants aimed to provide their children with a sense of cultural heritage and a strong foundation for their identity formation.

Relocating with one's family to a new environment inherently provides an invaluable support system, and participants who had the added advantage of being married to Czech or Slovak spouses experienced a significant boost in their adaptation process. The presence of a spouse who already possessed proficiency in Czech or Slovak and was well-integrated into the majority society proved to be a tremendous asset. This advantage not only facilitated smoother integration but also offered deeper insights into the local context and social dynamics. The built-in support system provided by the family unit nurtured a profound sense of belonging, imparted invaluable guidance, and significantly eased their transition into Prague life.

In this study's participant pool, it is remarkable to see that every participant interviewed maintains at least one friendship with a fellow Moroccan, if not multiple connections. These

bonds hold special significance in their lives in Prague, providing a sense of community and support. Moroccan individuals in the study reported various means of connecting with fellow Moroccans in Prague. One common avenue was through their workplaces, where they encountered other Moroccans who shared similar professional backgrounds or experiences. Additionally, social media platforms played a significant role in facilitating connections, with participants joining Moroccan-specific groups or communities where they could interact and meet other Moroccans living in Prague. Some participants also mentioned being introduced to fellow Moroccans through their spouses or partners, who already had established networks within the Moroccan community. These various channels provided opportunities for Moroccans to find and connect with others from their home country, fostering a sense of solidarity and support in their new environment. This interplay between offline and online networks underscores the enduring importance of Moroccan identity within their experiences in Prague. This indicates the presence of a strong connection or affiliation with fellow Moroccans within their social networks. The significance of this finding suggests that maintaining ties with individuals from their home country holds considerable importance for the participants in their new environment. The presence of Moroccans in their social circles may stem from various factors, such as shared cultural background, language, or a sense of familiarity and comfort in connecting with individuals who have had similar experiences of relocation. These social connections with fellow Moroccans can provide a sense of community, support, and understanding during the adaptation process. While it is acknowledged that participants may also form relationships with individuals from different nationalities and backgrounds, the consistent presence of at least one Moroccan in their social circles demonstrates the significance of maintaining connections with their compatriots. These relationships contribute to a sense of

belonging and may serve as a source of cultural exchange, emotional support, and shared experiences in navigating their new environment. The presence of Moroccans within their social circles not only reflects the participants' desire to maintain their cultural heritage and identity but also signifies the importance of connecting with individuals who share a common background in fostering a sense of community and support during the process of adaptation.

The social engagement of Moroccans within the participant pool encompasses a range of dynamics, including close friendships, acquaintanceships, online connections through social media platforms, and the organization of group activities. These diverse forms of engagement highlight the participants' efforts to establish and maintain connections with fellow Moroccans in Prague. Close friendships play a significant role in the social lives of the participants, providing them with a sense of support, shared experiences, and a familiar cultural context. These friendships are often formed through shared backgrounds, common interests, or personal connections. Participants may engage in regular social activities, gatherings, or outings with their close Moroccan friends, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Alongside close friendships, acquaintanceships with other Moroccans contribute to the participants' social networks. These connections may arise through work, educational institutions, or community events, and while they may not be as deeply intertwined as close friendships, they still offer opportunities for social interaction, cultural exchange, and mutual support. The use of social media platforms further enhances social engagement among Moroccans in the participant pool. Participants may connect with fellow Moroccans through online groups, forums, or communities, allowing them to share experiences, seek advice, and organize meet-ups or events. These digital connections offer a space for ongoing communication and the cultivation of relationships. Lastly, the organization of group activities provides a platform for Moroccans to come together,

celebrate their culture, and foster a sense of community. These activities include religious holiday gatherings, or shared interest groups that bring Moroccans from different backgrounds together in a collective and social setting.

During the interviews, participants expressed a unique understanding and sense of connection with fellow Moroccans that transcended the need for explicit communication. Participants expressed that forming and maintaining friendships with fellow Moroccans in Prague comes effortlessly and feels genuine. They reflected on the simplicity and ease of maintaining these relationships, highlighting the effortless nature of connecting with fellow Moroccans because of their shared background. In contrast to the challenges of language barriers and cultural differences in their interactions with non-Moroccans, the familiarity and shared cultural background within the Moroccan community provided a sense of comfort and ease in their social connections. The older participants in the study, particularly those with children, expressed a preference for socializing with other Moroccan families. They viewed these interactions as providing a healthy environment for celebrating religious holidays and cultural events, where they could maintain their cultural traditions and pass them on to their children. Being in the company of fellow Moroccans during these occasions created a sense of familiarity and a shared cultural experience, fostering a feeling of inclusion and community. These gatherings allowed them to create a supportive network where they could connect with others who understood their cultural background and shared similar values and practices.

A recurring theme that emerged from the participants' narratives is the experience of being perceived as "the other" and the challenges it presents in fully adapting into Czech society. Many participants acknowledged the noticeable physical differences between themselves and the locals, which created a sense of being constantly reminded of their foreignness. Some

participants expressed the belief that complete assimilation is impossible due to the stark cultural differences between their home country and the Czech Republic. They viewed the cultural gap as insurmountable, making it difficult to fully merge with the dominant society. One participant, who had the longest length of stay in the Czech Republic, explicitly stated that he would never become "one of them" because he perceived Czech society as lacking the multiculturalism and diversity necessary for a salad bowl-like assimilation. This participant's viewpoint reflects a sense of cultural distinctiveness and a belief that assimilation would require compromising his own cultural identity. Another participant equated assimilation with social pressure and consciously resisted it *"it's because like as a human being, as you said, like socially we want to be accepted, which I try as much as I can to protect myself from social pressure. So if I am OK, I start having Czech friends, like Czech romance, whatever...Maybe I will need to do this just to prove that I am modern and open-minded. And I got involved in the culture. But by doing this, I'm stepping on something which is my own culture."* They saw complete assimilation as a loss of self, where they would have to conform to the norms and expectations of the dominant society, potentially sacrificing their cultural values and practices. These participants emphasized the importance of preserving their cultural heritage also referred to as *core* or *essence* and maintaining a sense of self-identity while navigating the challenges of adaptation. Overall, while some participants expressed openness to acculturation and adapting to certain aspects of Czech society, there was a general recognition that complete assimilation is not always feasible or desirable. The participants highlighted the complexities of merging with a dominant culture that may have different values, traditions, and social norms, and the tensions between wanting to integrate and preserving their own cultural identity.

Table 2 *Selective Themes, Focused and Open codes*

Selective	Focused	Open
I. Cultural Dichotomy: Navigating Two Worlds	A. Language proficiency for effective communication: Overcoming language barriers for social integration	1. Pursuing career opportunities 2. Relocating through marriage 3. Seeking higher education 4. Crosscultural marriage 5. Expanding professional networks 6. Networking through social media 7. Maintaining cultural identity 8. Bonding with the local Moroccan community in Prague 9. Getting along with fellow Moroccans because of shared cultural background
II. Bonds of Belonging: Building Bridges with Fellow Moroccans	B. Cultural adaptation and identity preservation: Balancing acculturation with maintaining cultural heritage	10. Effortless friendships with fellow Moroccans 11. Building social capital after relocation 12. Observing local customs 13. Experiencing integration challenges in a Czech-dominant workplace 14. Finding work through spouse 15. Enrolling in paid language courses for language learning 16. Maintaining ethnic values while immersing oneself in Prague life
III. Chasing Integration: Struggles and Strategies in Prague	C. Support within the expat community: Finding solidarity and assistance among fellow expats	17. Participating in Moroccan community meetings 18. Celebrating religious holidays with fellow Moroccans 19. Being flexible and open to trying new things 20. Making friends at the workplace 21. Joining the Prague expat bubble 22. Using meeting and language exchange apps 23. Consciously looking to connect with other Moroccans 24. Experiencing frustration due to limited English use in Czech society
	D. Authentic friendships with shared cultural background: Forming meaningful connections with fellow Moroccans based on cultural similarities	25. Finding halal food sources 26. Reaching out to the locals for friendship 27. Noticing personal change after relocation 28. Resisting social pressure 29. Building perceptions of Czech people 30. Seeking familiarity and comfort 31. Experiencing limited knowledge of Czech as a barrier to connecting with locals
IV. Unveiling Identities: Negotiating Individuality in a Foreign Land	E. Building social capital: Establishing a network of relationships for social and professional support	32. Balancing integration with local identity 33. Openness to new experiences 34. Recognizing individual differences with local population 35. Socializing within one's comfort zone 36. Creating a sense of belonging 37. Finding like-minded people 38. Feeling deprived of connections with locals because of the language barrier
	F. Workplace integration challenges: Navigating cultural differences and fitting into new work environment	39. Experiencing xenophobia 40. Learning Czech as a means of integration 41. Perceived rudeness of Czech people 42. Reaching out to Moroccans through social media 43. Using spouse's already established social circle 44. Building connections with fellow moms and parents 45. Seeking emotional and material support through fellow expats
	G. Utilizing spouse's connections: Leveraging the social and professional networks of Czech or Slovak partners	46. Creating a sense of community through shared religious practices 47. Finding cultural comfort and belonging through shared cultural celebrations 48. Maintaining traditions and customs in a foreign setting 49. Experiencing cultural shock 50. Challenges in accessing healthcare and public services 51. Coping strategies and resilience in a new environment 52. Navigating transportation and routes in a new environment 53. Relying on family and kinship in the adaptation process
	H. Multicultural experiences through higher education: Gaining exposure to diverse perspectives and global interactions in educational settings	54. Maintaining communication with family back home 55. Building an image of Czech characteristics 56. Formation of friendships with internationals through shared activities 57. Reliance on expats and international communities 58. Striving to forming a solid social circle 59. Influence of personal values and beliefs on adaptation 60. Considering Prague a transit location 61. Importance of English as an expat communal language 62. Cracking the puzzle to understand Czechs
	I. Celebrating religious traditions with fellow Moroccans: Finding solace and community through shared religious practices	
	J. Openness to new experiences: Embracing opportunities for personal growth and adaptation in a new environment	
	K. Coping with language barriers: Overcoming challenges in communication and language proficiency. Selective themes	

**Cultural Dichotomy: Navigating Two Worlds** This theme refers to the complex experience of individuals who find themselves straddling two distinct cultural contexts, namely their Moroccan heritage and the Czech society in which they are currently residing. It highlights the challenges, conflicts, and negotiations involved in maintaining a sense of cultural identity while simultaneously integrating into a new culture. The essence of their experience captures the tension and duality that individuals face as they navigate between their familiar cultural background and the unfamiliar norms, customs, and expectations of Czech society. It encompasses the struggle to find a balance between preserving one's ethnic values and traditions while embracing and adapting to the dominant culture. Participants experienced conflicts arising from differences in language, social norms, beliefs, and ways of life. Within this theme, individuals may grapple with questions of assimilation, acculturation, and the impact these processes have on their sense of self. They may encounter internal conflicts about which aspects of their cultural heritage to prioritize and how to reconcile conflicting cultural values. Participants may also experience challenges in bridging the gap between their cultural background and the host culture, often leading to the negotiation of their individuality and a constant search for a harmonious coexistence of both cultures.

It is important to highlight that some participants face the added responsibility of balancing this cultural dichotomy not only for themselves but also for their children. As parents, they must navigate the challenges of raising their children in a multicultural environment while ensuring that they maintain a strong connection to their Moroccan heritage. These participants are aware of the importance of instilling their cultural values, traditions, and language in their children, while also helping them adapt and integrate into the Czech society. They face the task of finding a delicate balance between exposing their children to both cultures, fostering a sense



of cultural pride and identity, and equipping them with the necessary skills to thrive in their new environment. The responsibility to navigate this cultural dichotomy for their children adds a layer of complexity to the participants' adaptation process. They must make conscious choices about the educational options, social activities, and communities in which their children participate, ensuring that they have opportunities to connect with their Moroccan roots while also embracing the Czech culture.

This theme encapsulates the intricate process of individuals navigating the complexities of their dual cultural identities, as they seek to preserve their roots while simultaneously integrating into the new cultural environment. The choice to use the term "navigating two worlds" emphasizes the challenging task faced by participants as they strive to strike a balance between their Moroccan heritage and their adaptation to Czech society. The term "navigating" implies an active and dynamic process, highlighting the conscious choices and strategic decisions participants make to navigate the two distinct cultural realms they inhabit. It acknowledges that the journey of cultural adaptation is not linear but rather requires constant adjustments, negotiations, and compromises. The phrase "two worlds" signifies the coexistence of the participants' original cultural identity and the new cultural environment they find themselves in. It recognizes the inherent duality and the need to reconcile the customs, values, and practices of their Moroccan heritage with the social norms, expectations, and realities of the Czech culture. The complexities of this navigation arise from the participants' desire to preserve their cultural roots, maintain a strong connection to their heritage, and pass it on to future generations, while also actively engaging with the new cultural context and embracing the opportunities it offers. It requires them to navigate between different languages, traditions, social

norms, and expectations, all while forging a sense of belonging and integration within the Czech society.

The theme **Bonds of Belonging: Building Bridges with Fellow Moroccans** serves to capture the profound impact of forming connections and cultivating relationships with fellow Moroccans as a cornerstone of the participants' adaptation process in Prague. The snowball effect observed during the interviews, along with their active engagement in the same social media platform and private groups, provides solid evidence for the significance of this theme.

"Bonds of Belonging" conveys the deep emotional and social ties that participants actively seek to establish with their fellow Moroccans. It reflects the shared cultural heritage, experiences, and values that serve as a foundation for these connections. By nurturing these bonds, participants create a sense of familiarity, trust, and belonging within a foreign environment, fostering a supportive network that understands and empathizes with their challenges and aspirations. "Building Bridges with Fellow Moroccans" highlights the intentional efforts participants make to connect with and reach out to other Moroccans. The snowball effect, whereby participants frequently mention and refer to each other during the interviews, demonstrates the interconnectedness and mutual support within the Moroccan community in Prague. Moreover, their active participation in the same social media platform and private groups further solidifies the theme by providing a tangible space for ongoing interaction, sharing experiences, and seeking advice.

This theme underscores the profound impact of these relationships on the participants' adaptation journey, as they find solace, guidance, and a sense of camaraderie through the shared understanding of cultural backgrounds and experiences. The constant mentions of fellow Moroccans and the active participation in the same social spaces serve as compelling proof of the

bonds forged and the bridges built within the Moroccan community in Prague. These connections contribute significantly to the participants' overall well-being, resilience, and successful integration into their new cultural environment.

**Unveiling Identities: Negotiating Individuality in a Foreign Land** This theme highlights the multifaceted nature of identity negotiation, where individuals grapple with questions of belonging, cultural integration, and self-expression. It acknowledges that the process of acculturation and identity development is not static but rather a dynamic journey that evolves. As a researcher, I believe that just as relocation is a geographical dynamic process, acculturation, and identity development also undergo continuous changes that are intertwined with shifts in one's sense of self. The participants in the study navigate the delicate balance between preserving their cultural roots and embracing the influences of the new cultural environment. They actively engage in self-reflection, introspection, and self-discovery to unravel the layers of their identities, adapting them to the nuances of the foreign land. This process involves examining their values, beliefs, traditions, and personal aspirations, and reconciling them with the cultural expectations and norms of the new society.

This theme recognizes that the negotiation of individuality is influenced by external factors such as social interactions, cultural norms, and societal expectations. Participants collide with questions of acculturation, adaptation, and the extent to which they can retain their authentic selves in the face of societal pressures. They make conscious choices about which aspects of their identity to emphasize or modify, finding a delicate balance between adapting to the new cultural context and remaining true to their core values and beliefs.

it is important to highlight that while some participants had a preconceived notion or a clear vision of what Czech culture entailed, others embarked on their journey with limited

knowledge or understanding of the new cultural environment. For these participants, the process of figuring out their definition of Czech society and culture became an integral part of their identity exploration. In their quest for understanding, some participants found solace and familiarity within expat communities or social circles comprised of individuals from their shared cultural backgrounds. This social bubble provided them with a sense of comfort and belonging, shielding them from fully immersing themselves in the broader Prague society. Consequently, their engagement with the new cultural environment and the subsequent self-reflection on their changing identities may have been delayed or inhibited. The challenge lies in articulating the process of self-reflection when participants themselves are still in the midst of discovering and defining their relationship with Prague society. They may find it difficult to put into words the transformations they are experiencing or the changes in their identity because they are still navigating the nuances of their new environment.

For these participants, the journey of self-reflection and identity negotiation is an ongoing and evolving process. It requires them to step outside their comfort zones, explore beyond their familiar social circles, and actively engage with the wider Prague community. Through these interactions and experiences, they gradually develop a more nuanced understanding of Czech culture and its impact on their sense of self. I think this theme is crucial to acknowledge that some participants initially lacked a clear understanding of Czech culture and were in the process of discovering their definition of the new environment they were in. Their engagement within expat communities or social bubbles may have hindered their immediate reflection on changes in their identities as part of Prague society. However, as they expand their horizons and engage with the broader cultural context, they embark on a journey of self-discovery and evolve their understanding of their own identities within the foreign land.

As the participants embark on this journey of self-discovery and identity negotiation, they experience transformations in their sense of self. They undergo personal growth, gain a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage, and develop a heightened awareness of their uniqueness in the foreign land. The process is marked by moments of introspection, self-empowerment, and self-acceptance, as participants navigate the challenges and triumphs of unveiling their identities in a foreign land.

In summary, the theme captures the dynamic and complex nature of the participants' journey toward acculturation and identity development. It recognizes that these processes evolve and are closely intertwined with changes in one's sense of self. The theme acknowledges the challenges, transformations, and growth experienced by individuals as they strive to balance their cultural heritage with the influences of the new cultural environment.

**Chasing Integration: Struggles and Strategies in Prague** This theme focuses on the participants' experiences of navigating the process of integration into Prague society. Throughout the interviews, participants frequently used the term "integration" to describe their aspirations and challenges in becoming a part of the local community. However, I chose to use the term "adaptation" to capture a broader perspective of the participants' experiences.

The term "adaptation" encompasses not only the process of integrating into the new cultural environment but also the various strategies, struggles, and adjustments individuals make to cope with the challenges they encounter. It recognizes that integration is not a linear or singular concept, but rather a multifaceted and dynamic process that involves personal, social, and cultural dimensions. By choosing the term "adaptation," I acknowledged the participants' efforts to navigate and make sense of the complexities of their new environment. It allows for a more comprehensive exploration of their experiences, encompassing not only the pursuit of

integration but also the continuous adjustments, coping mechanisms, and personal transformations that occur throughout their journey.

This theme not only reflects the central questions of the study but also serves as the overarching narrative that captures the participants' experiences. It provides a lens through which their stories of adaptation, acculturation, and integration are examined. It forms the foundation for the narrative that unfolds throughout the study, capturing the participants' lived experiences and providing a framework for analyzing their stories. It highlights the significance of integration as a central aspect of their journey and allows for a comprehensive exploration of the challenges, transformations, and achievements that shape their paths toward becoming an integrated part of Prague society.

### Conclusion:

In summation, this thesis undertook a nuanced exploration into the lived experiences of Moroccan immigrants and expats adapting to life in the cultural milieu of Prague. This entailed an intricate examination of the multifaceted negotiation between maintaining one's cultural identity and aligning with the norms and expectations of the host environment.

The results of this study underscore the fluid and ongoing nature of the adaptation process. Each participant tailored their approach to adaptation based on the motives behind their relocation. Furthermore, the research illuminated the impact of their immediate social circle and language proficiency on their ability to adapt.

By dissecting these experiences, I endeavored to augment our comprehension of the specific circumstances Moroccan nationals face in Prague. This research contributes to the wider discourse of migration and acculturation studies, and thereby, provides a springboard for further

scholarly exploration. Such future endeavors may wish to examine similar phenomena in diverse groups or distinct geographical settings or delve deeper into certain areas like the influence of social networks or support systems.

However, it's important to underscore that the findings of this study, while insightful, are not universally applicable. Given the individualized nature of the research approach, the conclusions drawn may not be generalizable to all Moroccans in Prague or elsewhere. Despite this limitation, the study's findings underscore common themes and experiences that emerged from the participants' narratives, thereby adding texture to our understanding of acculturation within this specific demographic.

While this research is rooted in academic pursuits, it transcends beyond the confines of the academic sphere. It offers an empathetic lens into the shared human experience of migration, underscoring the resilience and adaptability that underpin such a journey. I remain hopeful that this body of work not only bolsters the academic literature, but also fosters an enriched understanding and respect for individuals navigating the challenging terrains of cultural adaptation.

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## Appendices

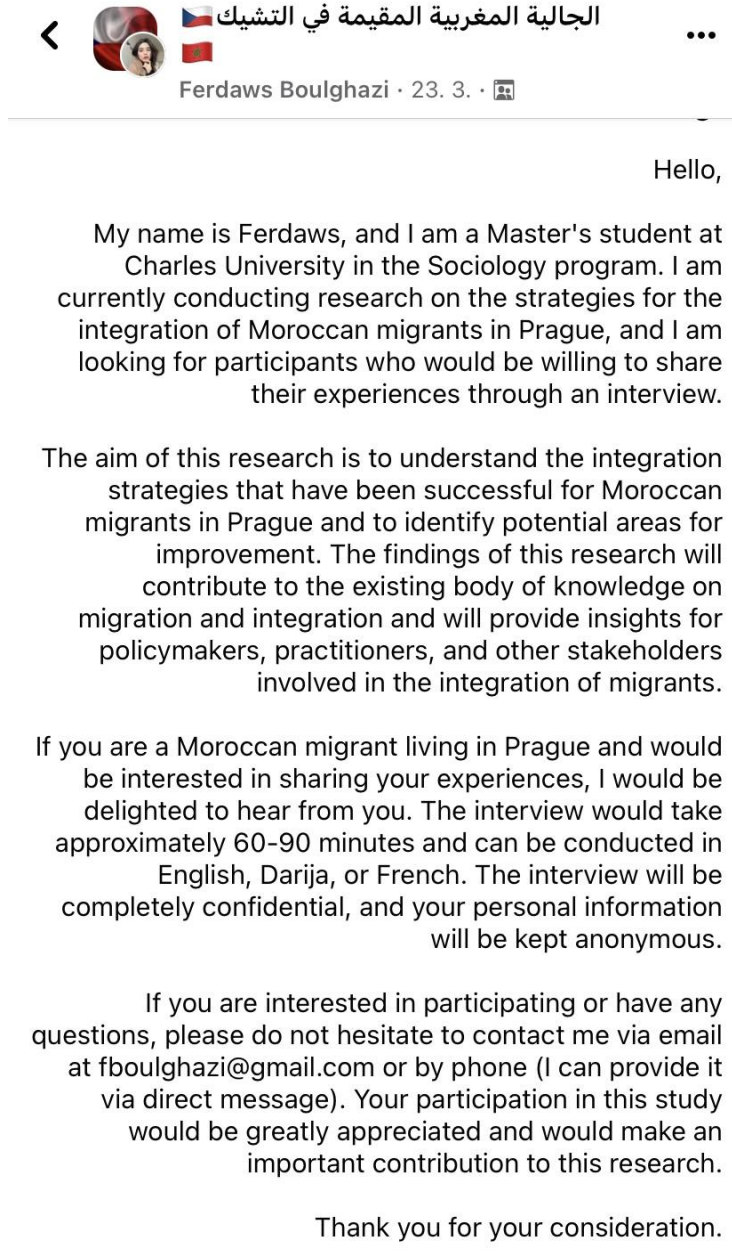
### Appendix A: Interview Protocol

<p>The first set of questions is about the Background and context of your relocation or settlement in Prague</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please tell me a little bit about your background and how you came to live in Prague.</li> <li>- What were your expectations and hopes when you first arrived in Prague?</li> <li>- How long have you been living in Prague?</li> <li>- What motivated you to come to Prague?</li> </ul>
<p>The second set of questions is about the Strategies of adaptation and integration that you employed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How have you adapted to life in Prague?</li> <li>- What strategies have you used to integrate into Czech society?</li> <li>- What challenges have you faced in adapting to life in Prague?</li> <li>- Have you experienced any discrimination or prejudice based on your ethnicity or nationality?</li> </ul>
<p>The third set of questions is about your Social networks and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have any social networks or support systems in Prague?</li> <li>- Have you made any Czech friends since coming to Prague?</li> <li>- How have your relationships with other Moroccan migrants or other migrants from your region or country of origin affected your adaptation and integration in Prague?</li> <li>- How have you maintained your relationships with family and friends back home?</li> </ul>

<p>The fourth set of questions is about your Language abilities and communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How have you navigated language barriers in Prague?</li> <li>- What strategies have you used to learn Czech?</li> <li>- Have you had any formal or informal language training?</li> <li>- How has your level of Czech language proficiency affected your adaptation and integration in Prague?</li> </ul>
<p>The fifth set of questions is about your employment and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have you found employment in Prague? If so, what kind of work have you been doing?</li> <li>- Have you faced any barriers to employment or education in Prague?</li> <li>- What role has education or employment played in your adaptation and integration in Prague?</li> </ul>
<p>The sixth set of questions revolves around your future plans and aspirations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are your future plans and aspirations in Prague?</li> <li>- Do you see your long-term future in Prague or plan to return to your country of origin?</li> <li>- What factors will influence your decision to stay or leave Prague?</li> <li>- What advice would you give to other Moroccan migrants who are considering coming to Prague?</li> </ul>
<p>The last set of questions is about your takeaway from the experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To make their adaptation process smoother, what would you say to a fellow Moroccan national planning to move to Prague?</li> <li>- Is there anything else about your experience that we have not covered in this interview that you feel is important for me (or others) to know?</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Facebook Recruitment Post

Figure 1: Screenshot of the Facebook post used for participant recruitment.



## Appendix C: Interview Transcripts

### **Mehdi**

Interviewer: So just to begin with, I want you to tell me about your age, your occupation, and how long you've been in Prague?

Interviewee: I'm 26, I am a software engineer, I've been living in Prague for 2 years. Yes I think 2 years.

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about your background and how you came to live here?

Interviewee: Well, I got my bachelor's degree in 2017. I worked for about 3 years and a half. Then I was looking for opportunities to come to Europe. One of my top choices was Prague. I think Prague, Vienna, Budapest and all of those clichés. The first offer I got was in Prague, so I came here.

Interviewer: You came here to study or to work?

Interviewee: To work.

Interviewer: You came here and got right into work?

Interviewee: Yes, directly.

Interviewer: Did you have a period between working and settling in Prague?

Interviewee: Studying?

Interviewer: Settling.

Interviewee: I don't think I had that much time. I came here, it took me 5 days of quarantine and then I started working.

Interviewer: And then you started working?

Interviewee: Yeah, it wasn't much.

Interviewer: The second question is related to still context. What were your expectations and hopes when you first arrived in Prague?

Interviewee: Expectations? I think I was just thinking that the city is going to be beautiful, which turned out to be true. I can't complain much. Besides this, I think I was expecting a more English-friendly place, which isn't the case still even now. But yeah, I think these were my top expectations.

Interviewer: So you were a bit shocked with the language barrier when you first came?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: Can you list some of your motivations to move to Prague?

Interviewee: So, moving to Europe, Prague in general, was just because it's one of my favorite cities in Europe. In my unbiased opinion, it's the best looking European city. Besides this, I think I just couldn't see myself fitting in Morocco. Of course, I have friends and everything there, but generally, I wanted to be in a place where I can just walk outside and see everything beautiful. Like, take a walk in a safe place or something like this. More open-minded place. I think these were my top expectations. These things I couldn't achieve in Morocco.

Interviewer: So for you, it was mainly for safety and for opportunity?

Interviewee: Yes, safety, opportunity and traveling. I travel a lot. So, being here makes it easy to go anywhere.

Interviewer: Do you go back to Morocco?

Interviewee: I do, from time to time. I do go there for a week or two. I mostly go there to work remotely, because I waste my vacations on traveling to other countries. So I'm not going to waste it on Morocco.

Interviewer: How would you say, how is your adaptation to life in Prague? I want you to start with the very beginning, until now.

Interviewee: When I first came here, I wouldn't say I struggled in the first month or two. I didn't struggle at all. It was a smooth transition, mostly because my friend was already here. I think he helped me a lot in the very beginning. I knew him before I came here.

Interviewer: Was your friend Moroccan?

Interviewee: Yes, he was Moroccan. He was a friend of a friend of mine. I talked to him briefly online before I came here. When I came here, he helped me a lot with many things. Especially during quarantine and all of those stuff, it was a bit tough, I guess. But generally, in the first month or two, it was mostly struggling with work. And trying to be in a different environment. Because of course, the companies here are very different than the companies in Morocco. So you have a very new environment to adapt to. But I think in terms of society, because I'm pretty much a very open-minded person. I didn't have any culture shock. Everything seemed normal to me. And after two or three months, I was just feeling like I've been living here for... Like I was born here or something. So it wasn't that.

Interviewer: So before coming here, did you have any strategies that you prepared at home? For you to be like, I'm going to go to Prague and this is what I'm going to do to better adapt to life there?

Interviewee: I don't think I had a very well-planned strategy when I came here. But I think... I knew I would struggle at work at the very beginning. So the first two or three months, I don't think I enjoyed it that much. Because I was like, okay, I need to go through... Because in every job, you have this trial period in the first three months. And of course, if I relocated here and I don't succeed in the trial period, I just go back home. So I was kind of stressed out in the first two or three months. Which affected my activity or life outside of work. And I don't think it was that enjoyable. But my mindset was that, okay, first two or three months, I'm just going to focus on work and try to succeed at that. And once I'm settled, once I'm safe from being deported or something, I'll just enjoy life. And that's basically what I've been doing since then. I give the bare minimum to work and I just enjoy life.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you experience any discrimination or any prejudice based on your ethnicity or nationality when you came here?

Interviewee: I think the only... I mean, for me... Another friend I have here, he looks more Arab than me, of course. He faces this stuff more often. For me, I don't think I've ever faced anything in this regard. The only thing which is, I think, normal is when you talk to some elderlies, when you don't speak English, they kind of get irritated. I think this is normal. Not related specifically to my ethnicity or something.

Interviewer: You think they get annoyed at everyone?

Interviewee: Yeah, they get annoyed at everyone. I can see it. I mean, if you don't speak their language, they're just going to get annoyed at you. Would you say you have any social networks or support systems here in Prague? Like a group of friends? Either they're European or from Morocco or a web of people that you rely on?

Interviewee: Well, besides the small Moroccan group that I have here, which basically just two guys that I met before I came here, a girl that reached out to me to help her relocate to Prague, and then another guy who came from Dubai who's also Moroccan. I think like five. But besides these people, I have some friends from work that I go out with a lot. I consider myself a bit close to them. And I have other friends, like one Czech friend and one Slovak friend, who aren't related to work or anything. I just know them. But overall, I think it's hard making friends with Czech people.

Interviewer: Okay. That was my next question, by the way. If you made friends with any Czech people.



Interviewee: Yeah. Like the only Czech friend I have close friends is a girl I met on Tinder a long time ago. But we became close friends afterwards. But I think if not for an app like this, it's going to be so hard to make friends with Czech people.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Interviewee: I think it's normal because you're coming to their bubble. They already established their circles and everything here. So when you're coming here as a foreigner, of course, they won't make any effort to get to know you. So the only people who are willing to make efforts to get to know you are foreigners who are looking for the same thing as you. So I guess I kind of understand why it's a bit difficult to make friends with Czech people.

Interviewer: I want you to describe your relationship with the other Moroccan immigrants that you know here in Prague.

Interviewee: Okay, like the guy who helped me here, got me here, is I would consider him a very close friend of mine. There is this second guy who I've known since like 2019. He's a good friend of mine, but we're not like very, very close. The girl hasn't been here for too long, like since December, November, I believe. So we go out, we have fun, we laugh, everything, but I wouldn't say we're very close. And then there is a new guy who came here with his wife from the US. I also sent him your message in case you want to know. He came with his wife and daughter. And I think we're kind of building a good relationship with them because they invite us to their house. Me and the close friend of mine, we're both very close to their family. So they invite us to their house, we go for family dinner, we go out. I think for everyone I have a different kind of connection, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Okay, that makes absolute sense. And do you put any effort into maintaining your relationships back home with your family and friends? Do you still have a bubble in Morocco that you reach out to and that you go to visit when you go home?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah I do. For me, I have many friends. So when I go to Morocco, I have a different group of friends. For example, every day I would spend it with a different group or something like this. So basically, my friends in Morocco and my friends in Europe. Because my friends in Europe are the ones I travel with the most. We go for week-long trips. For example, this weekend we're going to New York. So I'm mostly close to my friends who are in Europe. And in Morocco, yes, definitely I'm keeping up with them. And I consider them very close as well. But most of them are considering moving to Europe. So at some point I'm not going to have any friends back in Morocco.

Interviewer: You're not going to have any friends in Morocco. What about your family? Yes. Are you close with your family?

Interviewee: Yeah, I am. I would say. I think the reason why I visit Morocco is just to see my parents, my sister, and friends as well. But if, for example, hypothetically I'm not going to have any friends in Morocco anymore, I'm definitely going to go visit my parents. It's definitely a must. Interviewer: What if your parents relocate as well? Will you go back to Morocco just to visit the country?

Interviewee: I think, especially recently, I was planning with a co-worker of mine who's from Argentina. He wanted to visit Morocco with his wife. So he invited me to talk to them and just plan with them the whole trip. And I realized that there are so many things I haven't experienced yet in Morocco. Like the Sahara or many different places. So, recently I've been thinking I would definitely want to have a proper trip to Morocco. But of course, as a tourist. Morocco is enjoyable though, as a tourist, not to live there.

Interviewer: Let's talk a bit about the language barrier. How did you navigate that when you got here? Except that all of your work environment is English-friendly. What did you do when you had to speak Czech or you weren't going to get by with English?

Interviewee: I think because I've had two companies here. So, first time I relocated with a company, I was put on a team with five different Czechs. And I was the only foreigner. So it was five Czechs who have been working together for four years. They were friends as well. And I think it was the hardest thing ever. Because, yes, we would communicate in English, have meetings in English. But once the meeting is done, they would... Of course, they're friends. They would start to speak with each other in Czech. And I would just keep rolling my eyes. Like, what the hell is this? Yeah, but this was, I think, the only time I've experienced the language barrier, truly. I mean, there are some minor inconveniences. Like, I went to the tax office last week to get... Not tax office, but it was municipality of the area to create a data box. And nobody spoke English there. So I mainly communicated with the lady using Google Translate. I mean, the lady was so sweet. I would just show her the translation. She would smile, go do her, like, the job. Then comes back to me with her translation, shows me. It wasn't the smoothest, but at least this one was friendly enough, I would say. But, yeah, I think it depends. But, yeah, recently I wanted to get a specific tax number to pay my taxes. So you would call the tax office. Of course, they ask you for tax money. So they should at least have support for English. But when you call them and ask, nobody speaks English. Like, they keep just passing the phone between each other and the last person says sorry. If not for my Czech friend, I don't think I would have communicated with them.

Interviewer: Yeah, you wouldn't be able to pay your taxes. Yeah, exactly. Did you look into getting any language training to familiarize yourself with Czech or not?

Interviewee: I only know four words. But I don't think I've ever considered it. Because I, honestly speaking, I don't see myself living here forever. I would say I can relocate at any moment to a different country. So I don't think I want to spend that much effort to learn a new language where I'm not going to be using it for a year or two.

Interviewer: Especially because it's a hard language.

Interviewee: It is.

Interviewer: And do you think your level of Czech affects the way you integrate? So if you spoke a little bit of Czech, do you think you would integrate better? Or maybe if you speak good Czech, do you think you would integrate better? You would have more friends?

Interviewee: I highly doubt it. You doubt it? Yeah. I highly doubt it. Because, I mean, even with my Moroccan friends who are in Morocco, we speak English most of the time. I think if someone isn't willing to speak English that much, we would never form a certain bond or something. So English is kind of necessary regardless of what language you know or you speak when it comes to friendships. At least for me, personally. But I'm thinking if I learn Czech, I would still be making a lot of efforts to integrate, to intrude into their personal space or something. Because people speak Czech, you overhear them when you're going on a tram or in public spaces. But even if you speak Czech, you still have to do extra efforts to go up to them, talk to them. I think it would still be hard even if I learned the language.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about your work. How did you find employment and what kind of work have you been doing, if you're comfortable with telling me about that. And if you faced any barriers when you were looking for work?

Interviewee: Well, of course I faced a lot of barriers when I was back in Morocco looking for relocation to Europe. Because most companies are reluctant when they try to sponsor visa for someone in a third world country, of course. So I think I spent a lot of time interviewing. Sometimes I would get to the last step and the company would tell me, oh we're sorry we found someone who lives here, we can't relocate you. But once I got that offer, I think everything was a smooth sailing from there. Especially since I came here with a different company, after three months I was like, ok now I live in a different country. I live in Europe, so

let me try to apply to a company that never responded to me before. And this company was Microsoft, because Microsoft is here. I applied and then they answered me in a day. In Morocco I've been always applying to them but they never did.

Interviewer: What was your first job?

Interviewee: It was also a software engineer, but it's a different company, it's a mid-sized company, not very well known.

Interviewer: And now you work for Microsoft?

Interviewee: Yeah, I work for Microsoft as a software engineer. Once I got the reply, I was shocked, I was like, ok I'm going to take the opportunity and just go for the interviews. So three months after that I changed companies. So only six months after I came to Prague I changed to another company. And you asked about what I do. I mean, I don't think it's easy to do, because we do a lot of stuff.

Interviewer: You don't have to go into details about your job. I just wanted to know what you do for work and if you faced any barriers while looking for work, which obviously you said you did, because you were applying back from Morocco. But once you came here it was easier.

Interviewee: I think it's way easier than any time before now that I work for Microsoft. Because a recruiter would only see the name of the company and just be like, ok. Companies that have never replied to me before, like Google, Facebook and all of those, now they just send me on their own without even applying. Just because I have a name on my resume, they don't care what I do.

Interviewer: Ok, that's understandable. Do you think that you have it easier with the integration process because you're a young professional? Because you already speak English and you already have an education prior to coming here? Because I think it would be different for someone that has no education and no job prospects to come here and try to integrate. Do you think it was easier for you because you're a young professional?

Interviewee: I think so, I believe so. Especially the language part. If you don't speak English, how are you going to communicate with anyone here? Nobody speaks French, nobody speaks Arabic. But I think it definitely plays a huge role. And being young is also... I think there are some aspects to Prague specifically, because it's known for being the least religious place in Europe. So I'm thinking if someone who is very religious or doesn't have this young mentality and tries to come here, I definitely think they would struggle a lot. They would have a lot of culture shocks. Because I think two of the people I sent you, Mehdi and Asmae, they're both kind of more on the religious side. So they struggle with stuff like finding halal food and all of that. But for me, I think everything was smooth because I never cared about anything.

Interviewer: So you think your mentality and the way you lived before coming here has a big impact on the way you integrated here? Because you didn't have to change your life 180 to integrate?

Interviewee: Yes. I want you to tell me a little bit about your future plans. If you plan to stay here in Prague or if you plan to move, do you see that you have a long-term future here? And do you plan to return to Morocco by any chance? Yeah, let's go from there.

Interviewee: So I'm kind of thinking of moving to the Netherlands. That's kind of my plan. I want to move to Amsterdam. So I was thinking of moving by this time, by now. But of course there is inflation and most of the companies don't have roles at the moment. So it's going to take some time for the hiring to come back to normal. So I'm thinking maybe the second half of the year or next year I will try to move there. I have I think three options. So it's either the Netherlands, UK, London or the US maybe. Even though I don't want to move to the US, but this can be a choice. But I think because I visited London and I felt way different than being in Prague. Of course city-wise Prague is very beautiful and everything, but I just love

the English factor. That everyone speaks English and also it felt less cold than Prague, if that makes any sense. Because people here still feel cold when you talk to them. But yeah, I think the Netherlands is on my plan. I'm never willing to go back to Morocco.

Interviewer: Never willing to go to Morocco, ok. Do you have anything that you would consider telling another person that plans to move here, that's also Moroccan national? The things that they should keep in mind if they ever try to integrate into Czech society in the future.

Interviewee: Oh, I mean I would definitely just give them how life looks like here and they would make the choice by themselves. If you're willing to tolerate all of this stuff, you're not going to be able to... Because everyone I speak to, foreigners here, they all say the same thing about not being able to make Czech friends. It's a common problem here. But I think this is one of them. And there is the language as well that I'm going to tell them, ok, if you're willing to struggle a bit even with English, then make your choice. About the religious stuff I told you about. Because you know, most of Moroccans, I mean, high chance is that a Moroccan would be more religious than not. So I'm just going to tell them about this side as well. But I think they can make the choice themselves.

Interviewer: Do you view Prague as a transit location for you? Because you said that you're looking to move to the Netherlands or UK in the future. Was Czech Republic a transit country for you?

Interviewee: I think when I moved here, I didn't have any future plans. I was like, ok, I want to move to Europe, enjoy Europe and see how I'm going to feel about it. So when I moved here, for example, I never thought about the US as an option. But once I moved here, I was like, ok, I'm here, I'm enjoying life and everything, but there is still something missing that I still want to experience. So I was thinking, ok, maybe I would be better off in an English speaking country, for example the UK or the US. That's how the idea started building. And then I thought of the Netherlands because of two things. I've never been to Amsterdam, honestly, but just what I've heard of the country and the city. It's that it's more alive or more active than Prague compared to Prague. So that's what I know about it, which is something maybe I would like more of a city where I live. And the second thing is the citizenship. Of course, at some point I'm tired of applying for visas everywhere, wherever I go. So having an European citizenship would definitely help a lot with my travelling.

Interviewer: And it's easier to get in the Netherlands.

Interviewee: In the Netherlands it's only five years, whereas here in Czech Republic it's ten years. So it's going to be hard to stay here for ten years.

Interviewer: And do you often think of Prague as a place that's completely different to where you come from in Morocco?

Interviewee: Yes, like it's night and day.

Interviewer: In what way?

Interviewee: I feel like just myself has changed a lot ever since I came here. I was unleashed once I was here because of the freedom. In Morocco, of course, I was more introverted, I was more reserved and everything. But once I came here, I found my place at home. Nobody cares. It's just this mentality that nobody cares makes you do things without caring about other people's opinions. So, of course, if I was still living in Morocco, I wouldn't have earrings, I wouldn't have blond hair, I wouldn't have many things. Because I still go back to Morocco and I still get the looks whenever I walk down the street. So I think it definitely changed me for the better when I came here.

Interviewer: So you appreciate the freedom but you don't like the coldness of the people? Yes. Is that an obstacle, the people being cold on a day-to-day life?

Interviewee: For me personally, no. Because I still have a lot of other friends that I rely on or just talk to. So it's barely noticeable. Of course, it would have been nice to make friends with local people, but I already did that. So that void was already filled. I don't think I necessarily need more local friends. So for me personally, it's definitely not a huge obstacle.

Interviewer: You're more comfortable building relationships with other internationals, whether they're from Morocco as well or just from other nationalities? Because basically they can relate to everything. That comes easier to you, right? Yes, it does.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else you want to share? Just anything. It could be anything related to your stay here or...

Interviewee: Anything. I can think of something. Are the questions done?

Interviewer: I have more questions, but I still want to get your point of view on things.

Interviewee: Yeah. I don't think I have anything in mind now, but it could be my come. So yeah, I can think of something.

Interviewer: We can pause it.

[Tape Paused]

Interviewee: Sometimes it's hard to look for information here, right? But having Simo, who already experienced most of those things, I just tell him, I need to do this. He's like, okay, go do this, this, and this, and this. And then the plan is simple. I don't struggle, I don't overthink stuff. I just know what Simo told me is the things that I'm going to do, and everything is going to work out. And it works out most of the time. Simo does it with everyone, basically, when we meet. Because he experienced basically many things here, when it comes to bureaucratic stuff. So it's easy when you have someone who already went through those things. I think it helps you focus on other good things than just keep overthinking, oh, I need to do this, oh, I need to finish this thing. So I think it's good.

Interviewer: Do you ever feel like you're part of Czech society? Do you feel like you're actually a little piece of the puzzle here in Czech Republic? Or at least part of Prague society?

Interviewee: I think... I feel like Prague is home. For example, when I go to Morocco, I really miss... or anywhere else. I'm just like, okay, I can't wait to go back home and chill. Because I feel like my apartment and everything is home. But for me, I'm not a big nationalist, so it's hard for me to say, okay, I feel like I belong to this society. So I don't think I'm a part of the country as a whole. But I do feel like my home is here, for now at least. Maybe it will be another place once I move, so it's dynamic.

Interviewer: So for you, Prague is different than Czech Republic? I think so. Prague is the capital of Czech Republic, but for you it's two different things?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: Why? Because it's filled with other international people like yourself? I would say so, yes.

Because I visited many cities here, and cities, towns. They were... they felt, okay, everything looks good, they were nice to visit, but I think it would be even way harder to live there compared to Prague. Because at least here you can manage to do stuff. But there people barely speak English, I don't think there is much of a younger scene. Maybe in Brno, because it has a lot of universities.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a student city.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a student place. But I would definitely rather live in Prague. Because the only thing that's keeping me in Czech Republic for now is... because I like how the city is. So if I move to a different city, I'd rather move to a different culture.

Interviewer: Okay, do you think Prague shaped your identity now? The identity that you have now as a, let's say, Moroccan expat. How was it shaped when you moved here? Do you think your identity differs to the one that you came with from Morocco to Prague?

Interviewee: Do we talk... is my personality part of the identity?

Interviewer: Yes, we can say that your personality is Moroccan.

Interviewee: I think it did. Because, yeah, as I told you earlier, I changed a lot. I got to experience a lot, and I got to discover a lot of things about myself, and to experiment a lot. So I feel like I came to the conclusion to know myself way better than I've ever known myself before. So I'm a totally different person compared to the person who I was two years ago back in Morocco. And everyone says that, like all of my friends, family, and whenever I... especially my friends who are very close to me, they all know how much I've changed ever since I came here. And Prague was definitely a huge factor in this change.

Interviewer: Since you like living here, do you put a lot of effort into being the best citizen, let's say, or the best person for the city? Do you feel like you bring value to society here?

Interviewee: I think... I try to do what a morally correct person does. Of course, I'm not going to do any stupid thing, but I'm still appreciative of this country accepting me here. I never take it for granted to be here. So I try to do the bare minimum. For example, recently I just donated all of my clothes. So instead of doing something else, because I thought it would be the best thing to do, I did the least I can do. So I try to do just small things when appropriate, and that's it. I definitely don't go out of my way to do huge things, which I'm not sure if I can ever do that. But I try to do what I can, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Do you feel accepted here?

Interviewee: I think I do. Acceptance is a huge word. When we say acceptance, do you mean, are people comfortable with me being here, or something like this?

Interviewer: Do you feel comfortable in social situations, in social settings such as work, the bar, coffee shops?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think I do. I've never had any bad experience, ever. Like earlier, I was just coming on the tram, and a guy out of nowhere told me, Hey, I like your hair. And that was a nice interaction. Things like this make you feel more comfortable. But I think I feel comfortable without having this wholesome interaction. It just feels... It kind of feels like home, as I said earlier, like Prague in general. When I go outside, I know where I'm going. It's like I've been living here forever.

Interviewer: Alright, I think...

[End of Interview]

## **Mohamed**

Interviewer: Alright, here you go.

Interviewee: My name is Mohamed. I've been living in Prague for almost three years now. I'm 23 years old. I'm both a student and I also work in IT alongside school. So I work in both.

Interviewer: So let's just start with a bit of a narrative interview. I want you to tell me how you came to come to Prague or what were the deciding factors for you to move here. Kind of like the back story of you coming here.

Interviewee: So initially it started when I was applying to other universities. So I got accepted in Canada and other places. My visa to Canada got rejected and by coincidence, I came across my university which happened to have the exact same program that I wanted to study. And yeah, all by coincidence. So I went through the process, got accepted, got offered some partial scholarship in my current university. After that I went through the process with them, applied for my visa. It took a few weeks or so to get everything

ready. And yeah, that was actually in... I was supposed to start in February 2020. But one week prior to the start of the semester, my school heard from the Ministry of Interior that they didn't get my whole application. Although I applied. So it was like kind of a miscommunication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Interior. By the time they found it, COVID came, stopped everything. So I pushed my university or the starting date to September 2020. So yeah, and then I waited and waited until my visa got occasionally processed. And yeah, that's when I came to Czech Republic in September 2020. And both started school in person and within three weeks we went online.

Interviewer: Did you apply to any other universities in other cities in Czech Republic?

Interviewee: It was exactly that specific university, which is Prague City University as of now. And yeah, it was only that specific university and that specific program. So yeah, I didn't have any alternative choices or ideas.

Interviewer: Did you have any expectations before coming here? Did you look up the country, kind of like to get to know the culture and everything?

Interviewee: Yeah, I actually, like since high school or even earlier, I've been always on the look up of countries where I could study and more English pattern education systems, other than the French pattern education system, which was for me kind of not the place or the education system that I wanted. So that's why I was searching. So by the time I knew about the university, I already had some idea about Czech Republic, but I dig deeper, knew more about Prague, living in Prague. I also happened to have an American friend whom I met in Morocco, who's also working as, I don't know, head of IT in a big company here. And I asked him, I reached out, asked for some advice and whether it makes sense. He offered me some recommendations, he told me more about what are the opportunities, especially in terms of internships, in general, so how to advance my career. So that was also kind of a factor that encouraged me to pursue that. Interviewer; So your main motivation to come here was the program that you applied to, and getting an education and then working here.

Interviewee: Yes, exactly. So I went to the program, which is a cyber security program. The thing is, it's not something that you could study everywhere. It's very limited, like the schools that offer such kind of program are kind of limited, or at least whatever they offer is not up to my expectations. So yeah, it was first program, and then when I got to know the country, I got even more encouraged.

Interviewer: Alright, do you want to go back a bit in time and recall your first week here in Prague? Tell me more about it. Did you have any major culture shocks? What were the things that you had to get done to start to adapt and settle?

Interviewee: Actually, first, there was no cultural shock. I already did a lot of research and everything. And second, I felt more like very relaxed, relieved. Prague in general was really... I felt like more at home in Prague than in other places. So yeah, it was a really relaxing experience. My university already arranged accommodation for me, so they had kind of partnership with a private student residence. So I already had a place to stay at. And my school also arranged for my transportation from the airport to that place. So it was kind of a smooth transition all the way to getting to my residence the first day. And then within that week, I had to open a bank account, meet with the university, get my card for transportation, everything. School gave me some suggestions, school kind of held a day for welcoming new students. But I happened to arrive two weeks before even that date. So I just knew that first I need to find a bank account, second, I need to get my money to this bank account so I can settle everything. It was... I think I went to a Komerční banka. They...

Interviewer: Yes, I have the same one. They're great.

Interviewee: They refused me.

Interviewer: They refused you?

Interviewee: Because they said, oh, you only have the visa, the stick, but we need you to have the card. After waiting for a few days, they said, oh, no. Then I reached back to the university, they suggested Raiffeisen, another bank. They said they are kind of less strict in terms of these things. So I went straight to Raiffeisen, opened my account on the spot, which was kind of early. And after that, yeah, I managed to get money, the notes and get started with... Yeah, I also got a phone. Within the first week, I kind of got a phone, a SIM card, just a temporary one. From... I don't remember the exact courier. But basically, I got that one. And within a week, I kind of signed up for the student plan. And yeah, it was... So that's in general.

Interviewer: All right. And what about like the Czech-Moroccan culture differences? Did you notice that right away or did it take your time to...

Interviewee: Well, it didn't take too much time to notice that in terms of hospitality, how people behave in general. So it was... You moved more from a warmer culture and everything else to something that's more cold. But I was kind of all right with that. I just never even bothered with such things. But yeah, there was definitely that element of services that you are getting or like the inability to communicate properly with someone because they do not speak English. But over that week, you kind of just learned a few things and learned to navigate by yourself, which was easy.

Interviewer: Where did you come from?

Interviewee: I came from Fes.

Interviewer: Fes. Oh, and do you identify as Arab or Berber?

Interviewee: Well, I'd say more Arab. But my mother is from... Rif, she is from Alhoceima... My father is from... More north of Fes. It's Taounate. And yeah, so I would say I identify as Arab, but I still have the Amazigh roots and everything else. So kind of, it's part of the identity.

Interviewer: It's not important. It just helps me categorize the respondents into like which ones identify as Arab and which ones don't.

Interviewee: Yeah, I speak Arab and everything else. So I do not identify as Amazigh because I do not even speak the language.

Interviewer: So can you recall some of the big challenges that you faced? It could be really early on or it could be like the ones that you're facing now.

Interviewee: Okay. One of the first... Well, the challenges... I came at a very kind of unique circumstances of COVID. So three weeks in, we went into lockdown. Everything was closed. That was definitely a hit. A challenge in itself, of course. But it was more or less manageable. School was very accommodating, very responsive. So they kind of carried us away. What else? What challenge did I have? Yeah, first I was looking for... For work. I wanted also to kickstart my career. I had a good set of skills that I knew I could use somewhere. But it took some time before I managed to get a job, which was by the end of my first semester. I already got a job. Yeah. Otherwise, what was the problem? Second problem was when I moved my place of stay. I moved out of that residence to another place, which was just, I think, more or less a year ago. I reported the change to the Ministry of Interior. Then they came back to me and said, the residence that you are registered at is not registered for... The purpose of it is not registered in the cadastral register as accommodation or something. So some very obscure clause of the Immigration Act that says you can't live in that place. Then I needed to change the place. Just because of...

Interviewer: It's horrible.

Interviewee: Yeah, just because of a small clause in bureaucracy that says you need to change the place. So basically, I reported the change on time, everything. But I only had a few weeks to actually give them



a new address. Yeah, exactly. So, yeah. Here, where I reached out to both school, the school didn't have much experience in that because they never heard of it. Because that's, you know, it's something obscure. So I reached also simultaneously to the integration center. So yeah, they were very helpful. They arranged the call. We straightened everything up. They said, you just need to... The only option that was left was to change the place. Luckily, my student's residence was just fine. I went to them. They said, sure, we're going to find a reservation for you, get everything straightened up for you. And then within a matter of a few more weeks, I got everything sorted and settled in that country.

Interviewer: So you mentioned the integration center. Did you ever reach out to them for any other issues?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Or was this the only one?

Interviewee: Actually, I had, I think, another call a few months ago. Because I'm approaching the end of my school year. And I wanted to ask more about the differences between the employee card and the Blue Card. And what should I do to get either one of them. At least clarify a few things about the Blue Card in specific. So they were also helpful in general. Yeah, it turned out pretty well.

Interviewer: Do you think they actually helped the immigrants that reached out to them?

Interviewee: I would say so, yes. From my personal experience, they were very helpful. They provided specific details. And they even clarified things that I was kind of worried about. For example, when I changed residence, I told them I didn't manage to rectify all of the... I didn't manage to send them a new address within the time limit they specified. So I just left it for less than two more months until I managed to find a residence. And reported that while applying for a renewal. So my question to them was, will there be any problem in terms of processing of my visa if I didn't do that on time? They said, oh, it's just going to be the worst that can happen. They're just going to fine you for 3,000 crowns and that's it. So they kind of lifted that burden of thinking about what could happen wrong. And clarified a few things in the process.

Interviewer: And the people that you dealt with were Czech agents? The people in the integration center?

Interviewee: I think so, yeah. From the names, I would assume they are Czechs. But I only spoke English to them. They were Czechs mostly.

Interviewer: Have you ever experienced any discrimination or racism? But mostly discrimination.

Interviewee: Discrimination, I would say...

Interviewer: Because of your name or what you look like?

Interviewee: I would say no. My company, actually I was the youngest and the only non-Czech speaker there. And they were just fine. So that was it. Discrimination, I wouldn't say... I wasn't in a place even that would allow discrimination to happen. So I didn't see it because I wasn't in the right condition for it to happen maybe. But in general I didn't experience any of that. Racism? I'm not sure. There was just, if I can recall, one occasion where we were in the cinema with friends and everything. And for some reason someone just singled me and started asking about where am I from. By the time I kind of realized what he was saying or what he wanted. I was just flabbergasted about how dumb it was, the whole conversation. So yeah, the only single moment that was more funny than it was racist. Because it just wasn't worth it, wasn't even worth talking with that person. We just left and all good. But I didn't experience much of that.

Interviewer: Did you have in mind a set of strategies and a plan? Did you have an outline? Oh, I'm going to come to Prague and this is exactly how I'm going to settle and adapt and integrate. Or did you just wing it? Come in here and see how it's like and then follow the right path.

Interviewee: I think it was more educated than just winging it. I'd say it was a mix of both. I already had a good idea about what I'm getting into. I knew more about the city. I even lowered my expectations from

the city. But Prague was amazingly good. When I came here I knew at least what I need to deal with in terms of bureaucracy. What I need to take care of. How things should evolve. The kind of visa I'm applying to. All the immigration related details that I need to do were cleared up before I even stepped in Czech Republic. But the rest of it is just figuring it out. Managing things and seeing how things evolve.

Interviewer: Do you think the bureaucracy is a big part of coming here and dealing with a system that's really different from the Moroccan one and the French one?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, of course.

Interviewer: And then the language barrier obviously doesn't help.

Interviewee: I'd say the bureaucracy is still way better than Morocco in terms of how things are dealt with. Although, as you mentioned, there is a language barrier and everything else. But I managed to find some strategies to go around the language barrier. For example, once I... I'm sorry.

Interviewer: I was gonna sneeze. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Interviewee: Yeah, basically... In terms of bureaucracy, as I said, I managed to find ways to go around that. So instead of having someone to join me, someone from my Czech-speaking friends to join me while I'm doing things. I just got a data box and then whatever I do was already done there. So I can translate, send them wherever they want and never deal with them again. So it was a cool thing to do.

Interviewer: I have a category here. It's just for language and communication. But we're going to go back to bureaucracy later. I know that you speak English, obviously. So apart from that, how did you navigate the language barrier when you came here?

Interviewee: I would say... I only spoke English, so I didn't speak any Czech. Over just a few days, I managed to pick up a few things or a few sentences that would help me in 90% of the time. So it was just fine. Going to supermarkets, paying by card, doing things like... Just small things, but they were the most frequent ones. So yeah. Other than that, the language barrier was only a problem when dealing with some administration or something else. Luckily for the student office or the immigration office for students in Hladkov, they were all English speakers, so it wasn't much of a problem there.

Interviewer: Did you put any effort into learning Czech besides the small phrases?

Interviewee: I won't. I intend to do so, but only when I'm done with school. Because I try to manage so hard the school and work balance, both with very huge loads. So I didn't find the time for it, but I have the intention.

Interviewer: Do you think that not being proficient in Czech or speaking very little Czech affects your experience here as an immigrant? Maybe it makes your adaptation process a bit longer or a bit harder compared to someone that speaks Czech?

Interviewee: I think so. I think definitely it makes a bit of difference. But I wouldn't say it's a significant difference. Because in most of what I do or the experience here, everything else in Prague is pretty much filled with a lot of expats. A lot of English speakers, newer generation also speaks pretty good English. So I didn't find much of a problem. I would say it is definitely a barrier to a certain extent. For example, I work in a Czech-speaking company. Mostly everyone is speaking Czech. Although everyone speaks English as well and we communicate pretty well. I kind of feel that I could also contribute more to some conversations if I was speaking Czech. But also one of the advantages of the company I work in is that it's mostly done over Slack, for example.

Interviewer: Can I ask which company you work for? Is it a startup?

Interviewee: I would not say a startup. It's called CDN77. It's pretty large as of now. But it's a private company, so it's not a public one. But it's far beyond the level of a startup. Most of it is Czech speakers.

Even the job offer was also in Czech, but they still liked me and everything else. That was the problem. But we do everything mostly through Slack, so translation just gets me through and it's been just fine.

Interviewer: We already talked about your employment. You find employment at the end of your first semester, right? Yes. You've been doing cybersecurity work. You work in IT, right?

Interviewee: I've been working in a support position, but I progressed to doing other things beyond what support is.

Interviewer: Did you face any barriers in your workplace?

Interviewee: Barriers in terms of what?

Interviewer: It could be anything.

Interviewee: Just like something that I pick up either in your workplace or at school. I would say no. In school it was smooth in terms of work. It was always a positive experience. So nothing to complain about.

Interviewer: Do you think that going to school helped you meet people and have a larger group of friends?

Interviewee: As opposed to not going to school and in the same framework? Work made me socialize more with people than school. Because again, due to COVID, we were in a period where Czech Republic didn't start the lockdown yet. So they had a very smooth sailing during summer. And then when I started, already there were some problems because only a few people joined in person. The rest were joining hybrids. So we had hybrid classes in school. Parts were online, parts were in class. And we had some technology to help us navigate that. Then everything went online. We kind of separated. My cohort started with 15 people. As of now, I study with a max of 3 people in my class. So school definitely wasn't the place to socialize. Still, I tried to attend other events hosted by school and everything else. But the school and work balance that I have doesn't allow so much time for me to even be in the university and socialize more than I would hope for.

Interviewer: But at work you met people?

Interviewee: Definitely. It was more at work than in school. Because the sheer amount of people that work there, in my team in general, it was more socializing there than it was in school. Due to the low number of students that were there.

Interviewer: So you have Czech friends?

Interviewee: Yes, I have Czech friends. In my residence I managed to make friends from Kazakhstan, Belarus. And yeah, it was a good selection.

Interviewer: Do you feel more comfortable with the internationals as opposed to Czech people? Or is that the same for you?

Interviewee: I'd say I'm comfortable with the group that I got to know. Regardless of their nationality. So I don't feel a difference between the Czechs.

interviewer: You don't have a preference?

Interviewee: Exactly. The small group of people that I've managed to socialize with or to meet with was just fine.

Interviewer: What about your relationship with other Moroccan migrants? The relationships you've built with them, the friendships you've built with them, do you think it made your stay here easier? What's your experience with them?

interviewee: I'd say it was pretty good to meet some Moroccans. For example, my friend Mehdi, I was already in Czech Republic. And through our mutual friends, we probably came across each other online for some time, but we never talked. And then a friend told me, oh, he's actually going to Prague, you should talk to him. And then we connected. Until then, I kind of felt like I didn't meet or come across any

other Moroccan at the time. So we talked online and then when he came to Czech Republic, we had a lot of fun. It was a pretty good experience. It made things... He was the friend that I traveled with the most. We did a lot of activities together. Yeah, it was pretty good.

Interviewee: So you didn't consciously look for other Moroccans? Yeah, I didn't actively look for Moroccans in general. I wasn't interested. I was interested more in meeting people that would align with me in terms of thinking, values, or everything else, than just for the sake of being Moroccan. So I wasn't looking to meet someone just because they're Moroccan. I was looking to meet people that are interesting.

Interviewer: Would you say you have a close social circle here in Prague?

Interviewee: I'd say yes, I definitely have a close social circle.

Interviewer: And do you rely on your friends for different things like services or just random social meetings, social gatherings?

Interviewee: Yeah, I would say the small circle that I have is very reliant, because it's just a few people. And I rely on it most of the time when planning things, when doing activities.

Interviewer: So you've lived here for three years. Do you have any future plans? Will you stay here or do you just move Prague as a transit city to other European places?

Interviewee: I would say on the short term. I plan to stay in Prague for at least two years after school. Both to first advance my career, advance also in terms of pay and everything else, maybe learn some Czech. And obtain hopefully the permanent residency as well within two years from now. So yeah, that's also one thing that I would like to do. But mainly it's career-oriented. So if something good comes up elsewhere, I'm meant to be open to that thing. But overall, short term, I plan to stay in Prague at least for two years after school. And then we'll see how it goes.

Interviewer: Do you have any long-term plans after Prague or do you not know about it?

Interviewee: For now, the plans are after optimizing for career prospects or for work experience. Then I start optimizing for pay, increase in salary and everything else. So yeah, I'd say places like the Netherlands or Switzerland or other places may be a good fit for these future things. But it mainly depends on how good the opportunity is. Is it going to be in my field of interest? Is it going to pay well? Is the country that I'm going to go to offer me as good of a standard as Prague offers or not? So these are all parameters that I would rely on in deciding things.

Interviewer: Do you ever plan to return to Morocco? Not for short visits, I mean to settle there permanently.

Interviewee: I would say it's a far reach. Probably not something that I would think of. Maybe it could happen, I'd say years from now, more than 10 years. But definitely not going to happen in the foreseeable future. So that's not an option that I'm considering.

Interviewer: What could influence your decision? We talked about career prospects and pay and experience. What other factors could influence your decision to leave Prague for another country?

interviewee: Other than these, I would say first there should be a threshold of quality of life that Prague offers. So if I'm going to change Prague, it's going to be something better or not. That's the idea. So yeah, that's one other alternative. Safety, I'd say. It's hard to give up Prague when it comes to safety. Yeah, exactly. Especially coming from Morocco, Prague is significantly safer.

interviewer: I want to talk a little bit about your family. Are you close with your family?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewee: What kind of role did they play when you moved here? In terms of emotional support, in terms of financial support? And maybe describe a little bit of the relationship you have with them.

Interviewee: So in general, my relationship with my parents was more or less reliant on giving me the freedom of deciding whatever I'd like to do. Because I kind of proved that early on that I know what I'm going to do. I know how I'm going to do it. I know everything. So their interference in terms of what I'm going to do wasn't really that much. I was the one doing research, the one looking out for school, the one choosing which field I would go to even before starting high school. So yeah, my parents were always supportive in that regard. They always consistently delivered over whatever I said I'm going to do. They just know that I know what I'm doing and they are supportive wherever it is. Financially speaking, there was also support from my parents. But coming to Czech Republic, I managed to also raise funds, I'd say, from family beyond even my parents. And these funds were able to get me through the first year, I'd say, covered. And I was relying on myself on doing the next.

Interviewer: And you had a scholarship? You mentioned a scholarship.

Interviewee: Just partial. My school is private, so I pay for my own school, residence and everything else. But yeah, I had funds to cover me the first year and I found work, got everything done. And since my second semester I was already paying plenty of everything. So I didn't have any external support starting from my school.

Interviewer: Did you call them a lot when you just got here, on your first year?

interviewee: Yeah, I would call them very often, even now. We kind of maintain the connection. We call each other there at least. But it's a very hard thing to move from one country to another, even if you move to a better place.

Interviewer: I'm asking you if you called them to have them on the phone with you, just to make the process of moving easier.

Interviewee: I would say no. I never called them just because I was distressed or I needed support or I was feeling out of place. The opposite, actually. I was more relaxed and called them just to talk to them. That's it. It wasn't because I was in need of so much emotional support or whatever. I was just fine. I didn't need it. So I would just call them to check, to update them on how things are going. Actually, it was more of reassuring them or at least letting them know how things are going. But for me, personally, it wasn't really to get their support or anything.

Interviewer: Do you visit Family in Morocco often? How many times did you fly back?

Interviewee: I flew back once. It was for around five days, which I managed to find with my work and everything else. It was just last summer. Since I arrived, I only went there once. It was for that period of time.

Interviewer: Do you still keep your relationships back home? With your friends, with people that maybe you went to high school with, some family members?

Interviewee: I certainly check with family members. I maintain relatives. Occasionally, I would definitely reach out to relatives. I was just asking about them. In terms of friends, I already had a very close small circle of less than five friends. I have been in touch with all of them since then. They all mostly moved out of Morocco. So two of them are in France already. I was consistently in touch with them.

Interviewer: Which place do you refer to as home? Prague or Fes?

Interviewee: As of now, I would say Prague is my home. I feel more independent in it. I feel a lot of things, a lot of connections. Fes will always be the hometown and everything else related to it. You can take that cool experience. As of now, Prague feels more like home.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with Morocco as a country? Is it love-hate?

Interviewee: As a nation, I always love Morocco. But I would hate it as a country in terms of administration, in terms of how things are going there, in terms of democracy and other things that made

Morocco not the place I would settle. I would love the country, the people, the places, but I wouldn't like the authorities, the structures that make it a country.

Interviewer: But you still identify as Moroccan?

Interviewee: Yeah, of course. Proudly.

Interviewer: Was your identity shaken when you came here?

Interviewee: Not really. Maybe a few small changes or not at all?

Interviewer: It could be very culturally speaking.

Interviewee: I would say I personally didn't notice any significant changes. It wasn't that much. In terms of identity, being Moroccan was a no-brainer and it wasn't a problem at all. I just felt unique as a person and just fine compared to others. Because I was a foreigner here. But I was always never trying to blend in and get rid of whatever I had. My values didn't change. Things that I do weren't changed because they were already not fully how you see... I don't know, I wouldn't say traditional Moroccan.

Interviewer: You can say it in Darija.

Interviewee: I would say that I wasn't exactly subscribed to a lot of things in terms of beliefs, how people were treated, and so on. I was doing my own thing. In general, that was the case. When I came to the Czech Republic, I was just fine as I am. I didn't feel the need to change or adjust or do anything else.

Because whatever values I had were already aligned with the environment I was in. So that was the case.

Interviewer: How would you describe the other Moroccan migrants that you met in Prague? I know about Mehdi and I interviewed him. Maybe you can talk about him if you want. The other people that you met that are also Moroccan and trying to integrate here, how would you describe them as people and your relationship with them?

Interviewee: The few Moroccans that I know, which is my friend Mehdi, Youssef, which I met by coincidence in my university, which was a good coincidence.

Interviewee: Who else? There was another girl that joined very recently, that we managed to help get through Prague. I would describe them as very unique people that I would align with them in terms of values, way of thinking, openness, our connection to Morocco and everything else. The people that I feel really relaxed with. That's the general case. That's how I would describe my group of friends.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for people that would come here from Morocco for integration and adaptation in general or maybe for a specific part of the integration process like bureaucracy? What would you tell another Moroccan migrant that's coming?

Interviewee: I would tell them the first thing is that you shouldn't work with presumptions about how the country should work. You are the person who needs to integrate. It's not the environment that needs to adapt for you. You need to adapt to your environment. Being open, some of the things that you might have believed to be just fine to do in Morocco, you go and notice, actually they are not. These are the things that I would suggest. In terms of culture, legalities and everything else, these are the things I would focus on. I would give advice to reading up on what you don't need to do in terms of legal things. Do you report applying on time, to report on the changes, to do things. Ask people to do certain things, be aware of them because they are your responsibility, not someone else's. That's the advice I would give. In terms of culture, yes, there are things that are different, but you need to adjust to them and not be mad that they are different. Just try to accept them as they are and try to find your way around.

Interviewer: You mentioned the warmth of Morocco and the coldness of the Czech nation. Is that your only cultural shock? Or did you have any other cultural shocks?

Interviewee: I can't think of anything else that I would describe as a shock. There are things that are different, but I wouldn't go to a cultural shock.

Interviewer: Do you mind me asking if you are religious?

Interviewee: Yes, sure. Yes, I am religious. I am Muslim. Yes, just the way I was in Morocco.

Interviewer: Did that make it harder to adapt when it comes to going to the mosque? Because there are not as many mosques. I don't know if you go, but if you go...

Interviewee: I don't. I don't go to the mosque here. Because the thing is, I pray at home, I do everything on my own. In terms of the religious side of it, I already wasn't aligning to begin with the Moroccan way of doing it. So I wasn't aligning with whatever they believe, whatever things that they take for granted. I was always contesting a few things in there. So that wasn't a problem in terms of integration. In terms of mosques or everything here, I wasn't trying to associate or be with people that I really don't feel more or less relaxed with. So I didn't want to meet people just because they are Muslims or whatever. And there was also a lot of associated problems with the clusters of Muslims here that I just tried to avoid. I didn't really want to bother with anything at all. I do my own thing, that's it. I don't have to prove anything to anyone. I just prefer not to.

Interviewer: Because Mehdi mentioned that two of the other people that I will interview, the two interviewees, faced some difficulties getting halal food and whatnot. So I was wondering if you maybe faced the same thing.

Interviewee: Yeah, actually that part, getting halal food for example, my idea was, okay, if it's easily manageable, reachable, I'll do it. That's fine. But at times it was impossible. So I would just go to my closest supermarket to get things. Because I'm not going to starve myself just because I was unable or the quality of whatever halal food available are bad. I was just fine with the products that I'm getting. So yeah, I do not believe that it's a really strict thing or whatever it is. I believe that it should be about convenience. I shouldn't kill myself to just feed myself. I shouldn't block myself from ordering or doing things just because of the idea that you should strictly get halal food. What makes it halal is not the way it was taught, but how you are getting it. Alright, so religion did not inform how it's going to be. I had a different religious view of what could be considered halal. So I didn't have that bump or that challenge that I should strictly do that.

Interviewer: Well, I think that's all of my questions. If you have anything to add, it could be anything. I have one final question, but if you want to add anything before that, if you can think of anything that I didn't ask about, or you're welcome to add it. It could be just whatever you think is important that I didn't ask about.

interviewee: Sure. I'd say words of advice that I would give to other people who may be interested in Czech Republic is first, understanding that the immigration system may be a bit hard to navigate. It may be a lot of problems, so you should be prepared to a lot of bureaucracy, a lot of challenges in that regard. You should reach out to the closest embassy. They will be very helpful in providing the details you want. I, for example, managed by coincidence to find that we have honorary consulate of Czech Republic in Fes. And I called them, went there. They were really sweet, welcomed, and helped me through a few things. I'd say that's all.

Interviewer: Okay. My final question is about your self-reflection as a person. Do you ever sit on your own and self-reflect on the journey that you took from Morocco to a totally different country? And what do you come up with when you think about the entire process that you lived through? Did it make you a different person? Did you have to change? In any major ways or minor ways?

interviewee: I would say the process, starting from high school all the way to coming to a whole different country was always something that I intended for it to help me grow as a person to do things. I'd say the challenges that I went through in the process definitely made me a more different person. I early on

adopted an idea of dealing with problems, of coping with things going south all the time. Because even before coming here, I had many, many different challenges that I had to overcome. And each time I got rejected. Things can go wrong at any time. So I learned to just take things as they are, not overthink it. Whatever happens, happens. As long as I'm doing as much as I could, that's it. So yeah, there are a few things that helped me grow as a person in the whole process. I feel like that was really helpful. Also, coming here helped me explore more, travel, do things that I always wanted to do. And I feel that these things made me always... helped me a lot, were very nurturing experiences. Gave me a lot of... changed perspective on a lot of things, different cultures. I would say that's all.

Interviewer: Alright, I think that's a wrap.

[End of Interview]

### **Youssef**

Interviewee: The question is, I don't know, I don't want to say I have a lot of occupations, I'll just say I'm a student. Because I'm also a football player.

Interviewer: You can say whatever you want. I want you to really not be stingy with the amount of information you provide, you're giving everything. It really matters.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: So, just before we start, tell me your name, your age, your occupation, and how long you've been here.

Interviewee: Okay, I'm Youssef El Badi, I'm 22. Yeah, I'm 22 years old. I'm a student, football player, and vintage and thrift store owner. And, what else should I say? Oh yeah, I've been in Prague for one year.

Interviewer: For one year.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you want to tell me a little bit about the context, why you came here in the first place, basically your story of moving here?

Interviewee: Okay, so I wasn't planning to come to Prague. It was complete luck. I was actually planning to go to Italy, and COVID happened, and I didn't want to study anymore, I gave up. I started working, I started basically making money, and I didn't want to continue studies. But my father had different plans for me, and he was like, he left Morocco for me to get my education, he's not going to go back until I get it. So, he was looking around, and then one day he decided, because I also play football, he was like, why not try your luck in Prague, and study. I said, why not? I didn't know anything about this place, complete honesty, I had no information where it was, none of that. But I applied, and I got accepted, and then I found a football club, and then I was like, okay, Prague it is.

Interviewer: Are you Moroccan from both your parents?

Interviewee: Yeah, my dad is Moroccan, my mom is Moroccan.

Interviewer: Both your parents are Moroccan, but you were born and lived your entire life in Dubai, right?

Interviewee: I was born in Saudi Arabia, and I lived there nine years, and then my dad moved to Dubai, and we all moved to Dubai. I'm the only one who's not born in Morocco in my family. All of them were born in Morocco. And right before, like they just moved to Saudi Arabia, and then I was born. I'm the youngest, yeah.

Interviewer: That's really nice. So, tell me a little bit about your family, like, do you guys have a lot of Moroccan values, or do you live more on the Saudi Arabian side of things?

Interviewee: No, we were born and raised 100% Moroccan, we're not allowed to speak English at home, Moroccan Arabic and Berber. Because my mom and my dad are both Amazigh.



Interviewer: You're a Berber, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know how to speak it much. I'm Amazigh, Berber, yeah, but because my mom, I'm not sure, maybe they taught you this in Morocco or not, but my mom comes from a family that, my grandfather was the head of the army when we kicked out the French, and Sub-Islam, and all that. So, like, my family is 100 Amazigh, yeah, so like we have, like, some of them don't even speak Darija, they only speak Shiha. So, like, we are all born, raised Moroccan, even our home in Dubai.

Interviewer: I am as well

Interviewee: You speak, you can speak it?

Interviewer: I understand, but it's a different dialect from where you come from. I'm from like the Taza area, and I understand all of it, I speak.

Interviewee: I only know simple stuff, like, get me water, and all that stuff.

Interviewer: So, you were raised 100% Moroccan?

Interviewee: Yeah, raised Moroccan.

Interviewer: Your identity is Moroccan, would you say?

Interviewee: Yeah, and in the Middle East, people usually hide that they're Moroccan because of reputation issues, but my family was like, don't be ashamed, and I'm not ashamed, so I say that I'm Moroccan, with no shame.

Interviewer: Do you identify more with the Berber identity or the Arab identity? Since you just mentioned that you're from the Arab world.

Interviewee: I think, as Moroccan, I identify as Berber, but when I talk to the outside people, they don't know much about it, so I just say I'm Moroccan. Yeah, but Moroccans can tell from my accent, they tell me, you're Amazigh, from my accent, so I just embrace it with my accent, I guess.

Interviewer: Do you want to continue with your story about studies?

Interviewee: In what context? Like, why did I pick Prague?

Interviewer: Yeah, you said you didn't pick Prague, your dad picked Prague.

Interviewee: Yeah, my dad picked it. I just had one thing in mind, was to study media, because it was what I worked for four years, so I was looking for media universities, and some countries, I just looked at the visa application process was something to keep in mind. And anything that was too complicated, I didn't want to go through. So I just went through the simplest one, which to me was Czech Republic. Also, mainly for football, because that was the whole thing. It's either they come as a package, or I'm not studying. That was my deal with my parents, you could say.

Interviewer: Did you think that the visa application process to Czech Republic was easier compared to other European countries?

Interviewee: Compared to Italy? Yes, because it's the only one I applied to as a student. And compared to Italy, it's way easier.

Interviewer: So, easy visa application is better than a hard visa application? But wouldn't Italy be a more suitable fit, because it has more Moroccans, it's closer to the languages you know? Interviewee: That's what I thought, until I visited Italy, and I took everything. I had a different idea about Italy, I've never been. I just wanted to go there, because obviously, Moroccans, family, so on. And how it was idolized in social media, and especially as a Moroccan, we know how many family members we have in Italy and France and so on. So they make it sound amazing, but I went there multiple times and I don't like it at all. I prefer Prague much more, and I'm grateful I'm here in Prague, actually. Maybe I've been to Milano, and that's where I was supposed to go, Milano. I didn't like it. And then I went to Venice, because I applied three times to go to Italy. And all three times were rejected for useless reasons. So no, I think in the

beginning I was sad that I'm not going to Italy, but later on, when I visited, I'm like, thank God I don't live there. It's not something I...

Interviewer: So you prefer Prague? Did you have any expectations or hopes when you were, like, right when you knew that you were coming to Prague?

Interviewee: No, because I didn't know anyone, I didn't know nothing, I didn't know the language. I think that's why I liked it more, because I had no expectations. Yeah, zero expectations.

Interviewer: Okay, and tell me about when you got here, your first week here, your first month here.

Interviewee: So I came here March, but I was already studying online. So when I came here, I already knew people from my class, because they were in class and I was online. So the first week... Okay, the first week was complicated, because first of all I had to go to my new club, new football club. No one speaks English. I felt a little bit of racism as well, but that's a whole different side. But the friends I met in my university, they showed me around. The first day I was sad, because I was like, fuck, I left Dubai to come here, I think it's a bad decision, even though I wanted to leave Dubai so bad. But then after Dubai, I think when I got to see the people around and got to see the city, I think I liked it more. The first week was... I was spontaneous, I was doing anything. Anyone would message me and say, hey, let's go here, I would go, which is not me. So I was trying to get out of my comfort zone, but the first day I completely hated it, because I had no clue. But then when I met my university friends, it was fine, they showed me around, especially my university is in the center.

Interviewer: Which university?

Interviewee: Prague City University. They showed me... I don't remember it much, I remember only because I had university every day, and that's what made it easier for me. Because I got to meet these people, and after class we would go hang out. Are you still friends with these people? Yeah, they're my classmates.

Interviewer: What nationality are they?

Interviewer: So one is Danish, one is Latvian, one is Ukrainian, one is Egyptian, one is Georgian. I think that's... like from my class.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Yeah, those are the nationalities.

Interviewer: And after your first hard week of going out and trying to do whatever, did you have a plan in mind? Some sort of strategies that you thought about that would help you integrate better? It could be anything. It could be making a routine for yourself, or having a goal of making one friend per month, or whatever.

Interviewer: I think for me it was socialize as much as possible. My plan was, okay, I'm just going to go out as much as I can, get out of my comfort zone, talk to people that I don't usually talk to, go to some places that I don't usually like going to. Like the first one month I would say, I would always go to social events. I would see some events happening on Facebook, I'd say, fuck it, I'll go. Yeah, that was my plan, to always see any event, not miss out, go if someone calls me to go somewhere. I think that was the plan I had in mind, because also it was the beginning of spring, so the weather was getting better. And any outdoor, any... it was socializing as much as I can. That was my only plan to not feel like left out or... Because if I stayed alone, I would be like I made a mistake. But if I go out more, I would enjoy it. So that was the plan, to not stay at home basically.

Interviewer: Did you face any challenges in the first very few months where you were trying to adapt?

Interviewee: I did, and it was mainly in football. In football I faced, I don't want to say extreme racism, but I faced racism to a certain extent. I played my first league match and we played it in a different city,

not in Prague. I don't know, maybe you know it, it's called Ostrava. And we played against a big team, but the B team basically, and they had fans. And as soon as I got subbed on, I heard all types of slurs.

Interviewer: English slurs?

Interviewee: Not only English, but even in Czech, my friend told me... Because we had a huge fight with one of the players. So that was like the eye-opener for me, I was like, oh fuck, they are racist. Because I didn't play the whole match, I got subbed in the last 10 minutes. And as I was warming up, all I was hearing was boos, which I was like, it's normal. But then, for some reason, whenever I had the ball, they would make monkey noises. I'm not black, so it was to me like, okay, some weird misconception here. And then one guy called me a terrorist, and my friend in the team, the only... He's not Algerian, but he's half, he doesn't speak any Algerian. He's full Czech, basically.

Interviewer: He's Czech, but with Algerian roots.

Interviewee: Yeah, his father is Algerian, but not raised at all to be Algerian. He's raised to be Czech. Some guy fouled me, and he called me... He said something, and he spat right next to me. I was still on the floor. So my friend went and pushed him, and he went to the referee, and he told him he called him this. And I think it was he called me a terrorist or something like that. And the referee said, is he wrong? So my friend spat on the referee's face, and it got way worse. He got a 7-match ban, I got a match ban for doing nothing. So that's when I realized, I was like...

Interviewer: How did your trainer react?

Interviewee: That pissed me off, because at the end of the match, we actually won. So I shushed the fans, and I got beer thrown at me, and I got lighters thrown at me and whatsoever. And the coach got angry at me, instead of getting angry at... Not getting angry, but supporting us, me and my Algerian friend. He actually shouted at me and told me I shouldn't provoke the fans, and so on. So I was like, what the fuck? It's not...

Interviewer: Is this still going on? Not anymore. Do you ever experience it in your team? Or only when you go to play matches outside?

Interviewer: In the beginning, I experienced it in my team. But now I think... Not they stopped, but maybe because it was the first time they interacted with a non-white Czech. Because everyone that plays football here is a white Czech guy. So I think after they got used to me, and after they got to know me, and after obviously we cracked some jokes and blah blah. There is one guy who everyone tells me to stay away from him, and which I am. Because obviously he's racist. He doesn't show it, but you can feel it. Everyone feels it in the team. So no one kind of talks to him.

Interviewer: Why would you stay away from him? Does he hurt you?

Interviewee: No, it's just because he could say things that could create some problems maybe. So they always tell me, oh this guy is racist, don't talk to him. Just say hi, bye, that's it. And you can feel it, because in the team sometimes when... I have one other friend who I think is Kazakh, and basically not Czech. And basically whenever me and him make a mistake, he would shout at only us. Anyone else, no. So we kind of felt it always. But now it's not there. Like in the beginning it was, but now it's been what, one year? Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you say it slowed down your integration process in your football team? Did it break you at first? Maybe it made you scared to...

Interviewee: It made me scared. It made me scared to... I didn't want to talk to anyone, because I didn't know what to expect. So at first I didn't want to talk to anyone until I started like... Some people started talking to me because I was always quiet in training. I would go train, go home. But then sometimes, especially there are some young players, younger than me or my age. Czech guys who are trying to get to

know you. But yeah, at first I was always like, I don't want to talk to anyone. I just want to come play football and go home. But then they helped. They are the ones who talked to me. I never approached them, because I always was like, no.

Interviewer: How did you find your team?

Interviewee: Like first impressions?

Interviewer: No, no, how did you find them? How did you get into it? I'm quite curious, I have no idea.

Interviewee: I used to play first division in UAE. Yeah, and I used to be like... I don't want to say I ruined my own career, but kind of I did. When I was 14, I was already like... On the verge of being someone, I don't know. A big football player in UAE, blah, blah, blah. I was on... I think I was on newspapers, this, that. Like next Neymar Junior, all that stuff. I used to be called Youssef Junior, like on my kit. And I was the youngest player to play for the first team, at the age of 14. But then I think when I... Because I never faced any issue in my football career as a kid. And I had no... My family have no clue about it. Like they don't have a clue about football. My father is an engineer, my mom is a teacher. They don't know how to support, so... It was me who did it like by myself. And when the club let me go because of disciplinary issues, like I said, I ruined my own career. I had a fight with... Not with one of the players. It was like a physical fight. And yeah, I got kicked out from there. I think I kind of stopped because I didn't know where to approach it. And then I got back when I was 18. To this academy because someone scouted me. They saw me play football. They were like, OK, we want you in this academy. And after I graduated from the academy, I was like, I want to continue because I can. Especially after the World Cup. And it gave me like... Because the first six months here, I played one match. Which is the match which I faced issues in. And then I got a match ban. And since then I was sitting on the bench the whole time. After the World Cup, I think it was the time I got my motivation back. And yeah, it's because some people... Yeah, it's just... I sent... When I was going to apply for Czech Republic, I have... I don't want to say I have an agent, but I have someone who kind of helps. And he gave me contacts of some football clubs here. Basically, he gave me a document on emails of managers, coaches. And he told me to send my highlight videos. Because that's how you do it in football. You have a highlight, and then obviously you send the CV. So I sent this to more than... 60 something clubs? Yeah, and when I came here, I actually went on eight trials to eight different clubs. And the first one that said yes to me, I was like, fuck it. Pen to paper, sign, bismillah. Yeah, it's called Czechia Smichov. Yeah, it's like third division. It's not that high. Yeah, third division.

Interviewer: you'll get ther

Interviewee: Inchallah, No, I know.

Interviewer: Okay, so let's focus more on the social networks that you built here. Do you have any friend groups that you've been going out with for a long time? Have you made any Czech friends since moving to Prague? Have you made any relationships with any Moroccan migrants since you've been here? I want to know all about it.

Interviewee: So I'll start with the Moroccans, because it was a funny situation. I'll start with the Moroccans because it was funny. Some guy in my university, maybe you met him, his name is Mohamed, he's Mehdi's friend. But yeah, he messaged me from this random account on Instagram and was like, hey I am Mohamed, I'm in your university. But I don't reply to anyone who has a weird Instagram account, like no picture, barely any followers. I'm like, especially Moroccans, like... So basically, I didn't reply, I never replied. And then one day I was in this university party and he came to me, he's like, I'm Moroccan, I want to... I was like, shit, there's a Moroccan, he's like, yeah, I messaged you, I was like, oh, it's you. I'm like, sorry, I'm just scared of such accounts, I don't reply to them. And then one day he was like, come

with us, let's go to this... I don't know, it's like a terrace, he's like, there's this Moroccan guy, I want you to also meet. I said, oh, okay, why not, more Moroccan people. Yeah, and then he introduced me to Mehdi. And then it was funny because we're all kind of opposites of each other. I mean, Mohamed and Mehdi are kind of the same because they're into IT, but the rest of us are nothing alike. Each one is living a different type of lifestyle and so on. And we hung out in the summer like twice, all of us traveled. And then we also all reconnected in the World Cup time. We all went together to watch the matches. Yeah, and then we met some... We found this coffee shop where it was all Moroccans, like Tunisians and Moroccans, and it felt like I was back at home. So it was really good. And Czech friends, yeah, I did make some, but mostly it was like, I don't know how to explain it. Not close friends, acquaintances, you can say. They're like people that I either work with or like if I have a project or people in my class, they're like my friends. I don't have any close Czech people, Czech friends. I would say the Algerian guy is my closest. He's Czech, but I call him Algerian. He's the closest Czech friend I have. And there was one I used to be very close to. This Czech girl I used to be very close to, but yeah, I think when I traveled in the summer and when I came back, we never spoke again. But we were super close when I first came here. But then after that, we just, we still like, we met each other a couple of times on the street, but it's just, we never meet again. It's not as close as we were. What was the first question?

Interviewer: I asked you if meeting these people affected how you integrated. So meeting your Moroccan friends, did it affect how you integrated?

Interviewee: The Moroccan guys actually, they helped me a lot in terms of, especially Mohamed, he helped me a lot in terms of anything, like opening a bank account and all that stuff. He was super helpful. He directed me to the correct people. And I needed also to open a business license. He's the one who directed me where to go and helped me with it, even when I wanted to find rent, I think he was the one to help me the most with this. Because he's been living here for three years. So he's been through all of it. So like any websites I needed to look for a house or any of that, he's the one who sent me. He's the one I think who helped me the most. And also the Czech friend before.

Interviewer: The girl?

Interviewee: The girl, yeah. She helped me with like the... in terms of like translating my football contract before signing it. Because she's a lawyer, basically. She's the one who read it and made sure everything is correct and all that. So she helped me also attest it and any of that, like any other bureaucracy stuff. My other friends from like from university we're all together clueless. We're all new here. So I say we helped each other to find new places to hang out and go to like parties.

Interviewer: It's also important.

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly. It's like they introduced me to other social gatherings, I would say. Especially events. You wouldn't know them without some certain people living with certain people and telling like someone telling them like, oh, there's this like this art festival happening. Do you want to go? And so on. So I think they are the ones that helped me socialize. Because without them, I won't randomly go socialize. Plus also the fact that I'm the only guy in the group. Because all my classmates are girls. I'm the only guy in the group. Yeah, so I'm the only guy. And it is like when we go out, as being the only guy, I have no option but socialize. Like sometimes I don't want to, but... And sometimes I go with them because they're not sure about this place. They want some guy being with them and I go and it's actually a fun place. Yeah, exactly. I mean, they find me as like someone they trust to go with them. Yeah, so that's good. So yeah, I would say they helped me a lot in settling in, especially like the Czech guy. He actually helped me move my house. Like when I was moving houses, I didn't know I had a lot of stuff. And he has a car and he was more than willing to help. So we had like back and forth trips from my old house to new

house, old house to new house. So he helped, like he made me feel, I don't want to say at home, but made me feel welcomed.

Interviewer: Not alone?

Interviewee: Yeah, not alone because obviously the moving process is lonely, I would say, when you live alone. So he made me feel like, oh, OK, I have someone to rely on. Because I was thinking like, fuck, how am I going to move so many suitcases, a TV, this, that. And then one day randomly I just was like, oh yeah, moving stuff. He was like, oh yeah, I can pick it all up. I can help you. So he made me really feel like less stressful about the whole moving situation when I was thinking about it. So yeah.

Interviewer: Let's talk a bit about language. Because, yeah, Czech, right? Tell me about, so did you know that Czech was going to be super different from anything that you know? Because you know that it's a different language, but when you come here, you realize that it's unlike anything that you've heard before. And how did you navigate the language barrier when you got here? And let's start with this one.

Interviewee: OK, I did not expect the language to be, like you said, that difficult. I didn't expect it to be, I somewhat in my head, I thought it's like something like German. Nothing like it. And obviously the first time I heard it was when I went to the football club. And then in training, all he's speaking in Czech. And I'm like, what? Like, what the hell? At first, I didn't go to any Czech classes. I don't want to say I know a lot of Czech, but for a person who didn't go to any Czech class, it's impressive what I know, basically. And I think the fact that some people spoke English in my football club and they would translate certain words and then I would remember them. And I would make sure I remember. That's what helped me with the language barrier. But in general, if you are outside, everyone speaks English. I didn't face any issues. Like the first time I came here and I went to order somewhere, I didn't face any language barrier. Because I felt like everyone spoke English, especially in coffee shops. And the only language barrier I faced was the football. Yeah. And the coach knows English, but just doesn't want to speak. And then some Czech guys would like, he would explain something and I would look clueless. And then some guy would come to me and be like, OK, so you have to do this, this and this. And I'd be like, OK, thank you. And then especially in terms of colors and numbers, because sometimes he says like some certain colors. And then I had no clue. And they would like tell me to remember it. So now I know like, I don't know a lot of colors, but I know at least the colors that we have in training and numbers between like one to five or one to ten. So that's, I didn't face much apart from football. Interviewer: Do you try to hang out with Czech people, just to learn Czech? You said you didn't take any coffee, right? No, I didn't. Do you try to listen closely when you're at the football club to learn Czech?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I try to, like sometimes even I go out of my way to ask my assistant coach, like, what does this word mean? So he can tell me and then I can remember it. So in training, I do pay attention to certain words, certain instructions, certain, like bad words also to remember in case someone tells me those. So, yeah, these are the, yeah, I listen closely, but I don't, I don't say I like hanging out with Czech people. To be honest, I've tried.

Interviewer: You don't?

Interviewee: I don't like, because they have, especially the guys, they have a certain, they like going to this very Czech places, like Czech pubs. Like I don't mind pubs, but these Czech pubs. No, not my vibe. So, yeah, I sometimes hang out with them after the match because they drop me home. So why not? But to go out of my way to hang out with them, no. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think that if you knew a bit more Czech, you would integrate faster?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: At school or maybe in your football club?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I think it would make a lot of difference. Yeah, yeah. I think it would make a lot of things easier. Also, like when I was looking for a house, it would have made so many things easier. Anything like, bureaucracy stuff, you just speak Czech, it's fine. So I think, yeah, it would make a lot of things easy. If you know the language, you can go to places that you never expect you can, like you would be scared to go to if you don't know the language. Because there are so many nice places around Czech Republic, but you just know no one speaks English, so you're scared to go. So if you know the language, I think I would be more brave to actually go again. Because I've been to some places, but obviously I was with my teammates, they speak Czech, and I would like to go again, but I don't speak Czech. So I'm like, no, I'm not going there without any Czech person here.

Interviewer: Yes. That was it for the language, I think, and communication. You said that you studied media. And you said that you own a thrift store, or you do thrift shopping?

Interviewee: I own a thrift store, yeah, in Dubai.

Interviewer: Tell me about it. How did you come to want to work? Because I know you study, and what kind of work do you do? Maybe go a little bit more into, if you faced, so you don't work for a company, but you own your own store, so probably you faced some issues getting the license, or anything. Let's start with that.

Interviewee: Okay, with thrift store, I would say because it's in Dubai, and to be honest, opening a business in Dubai is the world's easiest thing to do.

Interviewer: Oh, so it's not here?

Interviewee: No, no, I'm opening it here soon, so that's why my friend helped me with the licensing, so I can get the licensing sorted. And then I'm doing a pop-up, I'm not planning to open it fully here. In Dubai, it's super easy to run a business, I would say, because it helps people. I did face issues in terms of, like what are the biggest issues I faced? In terms of, there is a difference if you are local and you are not in UAE, so if you are not local, you go through a different process of opening a business, which is 10 times the price, and if you are local, it's online, and you pay, like, because UAE has Dirhams as well, so it's 2000 Dirhams for a local to open a business, and it's 25,000 Dirhams to open a business as a foreigner. So I think that was the only problem I faced in terms of, when you search online, you see the price, and then when I went to the ministry, because it's me and my brother, like, we went to open the business and so on, it was a completely different price. And also here, because my university is not accredited and so on, I have a visa called other, not student visa, so to open a license, it's also so much more complicated. You have to go to the, like, I think it's labor office, it's some type of office, like at least 10 to 20 times to get one paper. So I think that's the biggest, and I still didn't get it till this day, so I'm still trying to get the paper, because every time I go, they're like, oh, you know, you need this, so I go all the way, get it, come back, and they look, and they're like, oh, also you need this, and then, so I think that's the issue I'm facing here with the business, because I really want to open it in April, but I'm running out of time, so I think I'll have to push it to May, so it's all because of...

Interviewer: What kind of clothes do you sell? Like designer or just like normal?

Interviewee: Street style, vintage, it's like, we're the first, okay, I'll give a little back story and plug to the thrift store, we're the first thrift store in Dubai, so we sell, like, graphic tees, vintage brands, like this is a vintage Nike sweater, we look more into the authenticity of vintage, because I think it gives a story to bring something back to life, so we have sometimes some teeshirts from 1990s, 1970s, and like for us it's to give a story and a life, and to also give this teeshirt another chance, kind of our slogan, so it's mostly graphic teeshirts that have a story, you can say like NASCAR, NFL, branded stuff, Nike, Adidas, we don't

go much into the high end, because it's too complicated, so we just stick on to authentic vintage, and also thrift, like normal thrifted clothing.

Interviewer: And you plan to bring that here?

Interviewee: Yeah, because here it's bad, like I've been to multiple vintage thrift stores, and it's terrible, so I saw a market gap, so why not?

Interviewer: Do you think you're gonna have Czech customers or international customers? Did you already think about that side of the business?

Interviewee: I thought about it, that's why I picked this location, I don't know if you know it, it's called Vnitroblok, and I think everyone there speaks English, so it's like, that's the place, because I didn't want it to be a place where I would face a language barrier with the customer, because I want to be the one there, most of the time at least, so I didn't want a place where, I expect Czech people to come, but mostly the young ones, people our age, 20s, 18s, and they speak English, so that's why I picked that place.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about your relationship with Back home, do you maintain a good relationship with your family? Do you maintain a good relationship with your parents?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, my father is kind of long distance since I was 10, he works in Saudi Arabia and comes to Dubai once a month, so I think we maintain, he always calls us every day, there is still the communication, I don't want to say that I don't talk to my parents at all, but we always talk every day, we always maintain a good relationship, I'm not as, I won't say, because a lot of people are super close to their family, they tell them every single detail, I'm not like that with my parents, but I really think I have a really good relationship with my father and my mother.

Interviewer: Did you rely on them when you moved here, to just call them every day, tell them about your adventures? Did they help you integrate?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, my dad was also, because also my dad went through the same thing when he was a kid, and my dad came from a very poor background, so I think my dad, I'm really glad he cares about mental health, and he would call me every day and check up on me mentally more than anything, he would be like, are you doing, like, are you okay, are you not sad, if you're sad, let me know, but it's not like he can do anything, but the fact that he asks is something really like, not very Moroccan of us, to be honest, but I think because my dad went through it as a kid as well, he moved to Belgium when he was super young and had no clue, plus I'm the first one to move back to Europe since my father, because my brother moved to Malaysia, my sister didn't travel, she stayed in Dubai, so my dad was really checking up on me mentally, like, every day, he doesn't do as much now because I think he knows that I'm comfortable here, but in the beginning he was, so I relied on them a lot.

Interviewer: Do you still keep friends in Dubai or Morocco? I don't know if you have friends in Morocco.

Interviewee: In Morocco, I think I got used to, I have friends from my *derb*, you know, my family were raised in Kenitra, because that's where my dad last worked, and we have a house there and whatever, so I say that's my home, I'm half Ouarzazat, half Kenitra, so I do have people from my area, we're still friends, we still talk, not as much, but in the summer when I'm there, I'm always with them, so it's like we maintain this healthy relationship, even though I don't talk to them, once I'm there, it's like we've been meeting every day. In Dubai, yeah, my friends work in my thrift store, we talk on a daily basis, we have groups, we play games, like video games together, so we're super close, also because they've been the same friend group I've had since I was 10, and we're like five guys, and we hang out, they're like family to me, so we still talk a lot. Interviewer: Do you keep them updated when you just move here?



Interviewee: I'm not telling them, I don't think us guys were built in that room, we say everything, but we still talk a little bit here and there, and then once I'm back there, we talk about everything, so we don't talk about it through text mainly, but here and there we talk, we send memes and stuff.

Interviewer: Are you religious at all?

Interviewee: I would like to say yes.

Interviewer: Does that affect your adaptation here? I don't know if you go to the mosque, but there are not a lot of mosques here, I don't know if you prefer to eat 100% halal food, because it's a lot harder here to get. Did you, did being religious...

Interviewee: I think, I want to say it made me, because of my friends, as soon as I came here, because they're all Danish, Latvian, Ukrainian, so for them alcohol is a normal thing, and the first time when they realized that I would never drink, I don't want to drink, not only because of religious reasons, it's mainly the thing, but also because of my football, I care, I don't want it to affect me in any way, but I think it made me unique that everyone understands and respects, like my value, my opinion, I was vegan for the first two months, and I said, fuck that, I don't want to be vegan anymore, it was painful, because I of course wanted to eat only 100% halal, I've lived in a Muslim country all my life, so I was like, why end it now? I do sometimes eat chicken, not necessarily halal, but God forgive me, really, but I do not find it as a barrier, to me, I've never faced it like a barrier, I just saw it as something normal that I have to do, it's not a barrier for me, I don't go to mosques a lot here, because first of all there is nothing nearby, I don't know if there is one in the center, honestly I never checked.

Interviewer: I don't think so, I think it's one that a lot of expats go to, Egyptians and Moroccans go to.

Interviewee: I know one that I went to for Eid prayer, it's all the way in Prague 8, Palmovka side, it was really nice, because also in Eid, you feel at home, it actually felt like I was back in Middle East, like in Dubai, but apart from that, I don't go to the mosque here, no.

Interviewer: Will you stay here for a long time, or will you move? What are your future plans and aspirations? Do you see that you have a future here, for the long term, or do you plan to return to Dubai once you're done with your studies, or will you go to another European country, like Germany, Netherlands?

Interviewee: I think I love it here a bit too much, in any case, I'm not going to stay here, I think I love it here a bit too much, in my head now, I would say I'm going to stay here after I graduate, but also, I don't want it to be like, obviously, wherever football takes me, I will go, Dubai, no way am I going back, I don't want to go back, I'm tired of that place, mentally and physically, I no longer want to be there anymore, I would go visit, not more. I haven't been much around Europe, but so far, where I've been, if I'm willing and I have a choice to move somewhere, I would love to move to Austria, obviously, but so far, I find my life here balanced, the way I like it, I have a certain routine, I know a lot of people around, I know my way around the city, I find it easy to navigate around the city, so far, my future plan is to stay here as much as I can.

Interviewer: So the only factor that could influence your move is football, so if somebody comes and gives you a football contract in Germany, you will move to Germany, apart from that, you're happy?

Interviewee: Yeah, spot on.

Interviewer: And you don't want to go back to...

Interviewee: No way.

Interviewer: You don't want to go back to Morocco after?

Interviewee: I never live there, I know if I go live there, it might be fun, because obviously, I'm well off in Morocco, I think it's only a problem if you're not, but at the same time, I don't see myself living in

Morocco, because there is nothing, I don't see anything for me there, I'm a photographer, if I want to, there isn't much options, a thrift store in Morocco is not going to make much money, I mean I supply from Morocco and I sell in Dubai, that's how it goes. Yeah, I don't see myself in Morocco, at least not now.

Interviewer: But you still identify culturally as Moroccan.

Interviewee: Of course, every summer, three months, I'm there, 100% Moroccan, Maghrebi, even my phone, I have the World Cup pictures, sometimes, like it keeps changing, but yeah, Morocco is in my blood.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice or anecdotes for either Moroccan migrants or Arab migrants that would like to move here? Something very important that you would like to communicate to them?

Obviously, all in the sphere of better integration, better adaptation, making Prague their home a bit faster.

Interviewee: I think the best way is honestly to socialize as much as possible, because I feel like so many people want to find the comfort zone of socializing with people that are from the same nationality or same mindset. And I think here, especially if you come from Morocco, I don't know, maybe Morocco it would be easier for you to integrate in Europe, but if you come from, like where I came from, the Middle East, it's not as easy because it's a completely different lifestyle, I'm not only talking about people, I'm talking about everything here is different, compared to the Middle East, like everything in the Middle East is so easy and spoon-fed, like you want to go anywhere, you have your car, you just take it and go, but here, the fact that you have to go out and walk, some people like it, some people don't like it, I think it's just that to keep an open mind for everything, and to not look for your comfort zone, that's the easiest way, because I think that's how I did it, and I have an Algerian friend in my school, she also came from Dubai, and she's not happy here because she's not socializing as much, and I keep telling her, let's go out, let's socialize, I'll introduce you to new people, but she just doesn't want to get out of her comfort zone, so I think that's why she's not integrated here well.

Interviewer: So for you, the most effective way to integrate is to go out and socialize?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you have a massive culture shock when you came here?

Interviewee: Yes, I even made a documentary about it for my first year. I think here, I don't want to say people are less happy, but you can just see it, I don't know, in Dubai, you walk around, people are smiling at you, you smile back at them, I think in Morocco, it's the same, especially if you live in the area for at least two months, here, if I go to the same place, no one will remember anything, they are cold, maybe because I lived in Dubai for a bit too long in the same area, so wherever I went, everyone knows who you are, but here, I think even if you live for one year, you'll be able to remember everything, and I think that's the most important thing. So wherever I went, everyone knows who you are, but here, I think even if you live for one year and you go to the same place, no one cares, they don't want to, you know, I would say the customer service was the biggest shock. In Dubai, everything, like I said, spoon-fed. Here, no.

Interviewer: What about the alcohol?

Interviewee: Yeah, the fact that I was seeing drunk people around, just like that, was to me like, wow, okay. Alcohol availability is also in the UAE, you can find it anywhere, but the fact that people, they get so drunk, and yeah, that was to me the biggest shock, and also the fact that I encountered sometimes some certain drugs. I was one time in this bar, Kontakt, I'll say the name, so people can keep in mind to not go there, to be honest. Kontakt Bar is a place where people go there and do cocaine, heroin, and it's a super fancy place, so that's why I was shocked. It's a super fancy place, and I was in the basement side, after they closed, I didn't know they closed, I was with a friend, the Czech friend, and then they all started doing like cocaine and heroin, and to me that was like, what the fuck is happening? Already alcohol was a

problem, and now this, so yeah, that was also a cultural shock that drugs are super normalized here, meanwhile Moroccan weed is normal, whatever. But yeah, also public transport is a cultural shock for me. We don't have, yeah, even in Morocco it's not really... No.

Interviewer: here it's really good.

Interviewee: Yeah, so to me I was like, wow, I live right next to the tram, wow, okay, so I can walk anywhere, which was also a big shock. What else did I face? Let me remember from my documentary. Yeah, the fact that most of the things are outdoor here, is because I'm so used to the indoor lifestyle.

Interviewer: Oh, because it's so hot in Dubai.

Interviewee: Yeah, to me like 90% of the things are outdoor, especially because I came in like spring, summer, in the first six months, so yeah, I think that was the biggest cultural shock for me, those things.

Interviewer: I don't have any more questions, but if you would like to add anything, or if you think we missed something important, you're welcome to talk about it.

Interviewee: About integration, honestly, I think, what else can I say? I think a lot of people are also scared, like in general, not only students, but I think to go, yeah, maybe you're religious and whatever, but it's not bad to go to a party once in a while, go somewhere loud, clubbing and whatever, because really these nights are the nights you sometimes meet, you experience some of the things that you will remember forever, like fun stuff, not traumatizing stuff. But you meet some people, so many times I'm out at night, I hate going out clubbing, but sometimes I get in, not clubbing, but just going out at night in general, go to a bar with your friends until like 4am, because I'm a morning person, especially in this weather I hate the night, but sometimes you just get the mood, and when you go out, it's really a fun night, and you get to meet some random people that you will remember forever, because you encountered them in a funny way, so I think a lot of people are scared of this, especially because in the Middle East we don't have this, going out at night and partying, just do it, honestly, to just go around, I think the night lifestyle is something that everyone should experience here, that's one thing I would say, at least give it a shot, if it's not yours, it's not yours, but that's something that will help you integrate better in this country.

Interviewer: Would you ever think about changing your identity drastically to fit in?

Interviewee: No, that's what I was worried to do, but I never did it, that's why me and my closest friends in Dubai, we have a bet, and they thought that once I go to Europe, because I'm a guy who really, I don't go out at night, I don't drink, I don't smoke, I've never smoked, all these things, and my friend told me that as soon as I go to Europe, I will completely change, switch, be an alcoholic, stop playing football, blah blah blah, and we made a huge bet, I sold my friend my car, and I told him if I change, it's yours, because he's still paying me in installments, and I was like, you'll stop paying me, as soon as you think that I changed personality, you can take it for free, so I think I'm true to myself that I didn't change, and so many times I wanted to fit in, but I'm like, I'm not going out of my way, a lot of my friends just like going out at night and clubbing, and they hate the fact that I don't join them every week, I join them maybe once every two months, because I don't want to, I don't want to change my lifestyle, my mindset, and so many times people are like, oh try, it's only alcohol, I'm like, no, I stuck to my promise, I don't want to, I don't want to, so yeah, I'm not going to change myself to fit in, I think that's the worst thing to do, because you will eventually not be happy, and isolate yourself, so no. Yeah.

Interviewer: So that's an absolute no for you?

Interviewee: No. You can find other ways to integrate.

Interviewer: others?

Interviewee: Exactly, yeah, you'll always find your people, especially in Czech Republic.

Interviewer: Why especially in Czech Republic?

Interviewer: A lot of foreigners, like, compared to, there is a lot of Erasmus students, I don't know if you realised, and I don't know why they choose Czech Republic also, I have no clue why, Because Prague is beautiful. But, to me, because I had no clue what is Prague, that's why I'm still like confused. I think also the fact that it's cheap, you have to keep it in mind, yeah, like if you compare, especially people who want to like, go out and whatsoever, it's super cheap to be here, so yeah, I think here is the easiest place to find your people. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think Prague being an international city is a big plus for your integration process? Yes, because I've met nationalities that I've never expected that I can meet. Latvian, especially, I've never thought people from Latvia, like, leave Latvia, you know. Exactly, like, and the girl also that I know, her father is like the Prime Minister of Latvia. So it's like, yeah. So, yeah, you get to meet some certain people, like, it doesn't make sense, like, how are we all meeting? And it helps that we all speak English. Yeah, exactly, yeah, especially in English universities.

Interviewer: Do you think you would find it a bit harder if you didn't speak much English when you're here?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, yeah, like, we have some students who, like Erasmus students, who are coming from French university, and they don't speak much English, and there is like one group of only French people, and no one gets close to them because no one likes the fact that they don't really speak English much. So they're only a bubble of French people only, you know. Yeah, and it would happen to Moroccans, like, we grew up in Morocco. Yeah. Which I think, I'm going to find some of those. We are planning, like, me, Mehdi, and Mohamed, we are, we found one more Moroccan girl, I think she also works here, and then he's the one who told me, because it was me, Mehdi, Mohamed, and the Moroccan girl, and we said Ramadan is coming, we all have to hang out for Ramadan, we have to make it Moroccan enough, and then he told me about you, and then I think I know one more, but I'm not sure if she lives in Prague or Plzeň, because I didn't talk to her for a long time, but she's Moroccan. So we want to, like, make this Moroccan community, make a group, make all Moroccans meet. So yeah, that's the plan, really.

Interviewer: Okay, I think we're done with the interview.

[Tape paused]

Interviewee: After the match, because I shushed the fans and whatsoever, they actually, someone from the club told us that the fans are waiting outside the club, and they threatened to be, like, to, not only me, but to throw rocks, to, like, our team bus, basically, you know, like, something which is not safe for the whole team. So we had to wait three hours until we had to be police escorted.

Interviewer: Oh, that was that serious, huh? Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: So that was one thing, yeah. But it was fun. It was a good experience. So yeah, just add that. That's it.

[End of interview]

## **Samia**

Interviewer: Alright, do you mind telling me your name, your occupation and how long have you been living in Prague?

Interviewee: My name is Samia, I have been living here in Prague for about 5 months, 6 months and I have around 26 and I'm going to have 27 soon.

Interviewer: Alright, ok.

Interviewee: I'm around 27 years old. 27,

Interviewer: ok. Do you mind telling me about the context of your move from Morocco to Prague?

Interviewee: Yes, for my career there are not very many automotive companies in Morocco so I wanted to know more to build up my career better. I was trying to check up on the Moroccan automotive industry and it was not enough for me. It was very limited so I wanted something bigger and I wanted to learn more. For me automotive is not a career I'm looking to work in, it's something about my passion. Because my father used to work in the automotive industry so I have a very tight relationship with the automotive sector. That's why I'm working on it and here to be honest I've learned much more which is good for me.

Interviewer: Ok, so you moved here for your career, for your work. Do you mind telling me exactly what automotive means? Is it engineering or...?

Interviewee: Automotive is the science behind cars. Cars, ok, so you work for a car company here.

Interviewer: Yes, for a car company. Do you mind specifying which one?

Interviewee: Well, for now, I'm working at Valeo. It's not a car maker, it's a supplier. Ok. Tier one. It's a supplier tier one.

Interviewer: Ok, you're going to excuse me because I don't know what any of that means but it's ok. So, was Prague your first choice when you decided you wanted to move from Morocco?

Interviewee: Not really. I was planning to stay near Morocco. I was planning to go to France but unfortunately for my experience, I got an interview with a company which is very known in France. But it was also... I don't know how to say it in English. They give you a contract but send you to work elsewhere.

Interviewer: So, you had a contract with a company but you're working with a different one.

Interviewee: It's a service.

Interviewer: Outsourcing?

Interviewee: Yes, outsourcing. Ok. It was just outsourcing, not a car maker or a supplier of automobiles. They had an issue with me wearing the veil, and they said I needed to take it off if I wanted to work with them. But it was difficult for me. I was planning to move to Germany. So, I was applying to Germany, Sweden, also the Czech Republic. It was by accident because I was applying a lot in different countries. But I was aiming for either Germany or Sweden because I have friends there. And they were my colleagues in Morocco. So, we know each other for a long time. But they contacted me. It was a good thing. I was also working with a company in Morocco. So, I was working with a company in Morocco. So, we know each other for a long time. But they contacted me. Is it possible to talk now about my experience? Yeah, of course. I was applying a lot, everywhere, in every country. I was just looking for something about system test engineering. Because I was eager to learn. So, I was applying everywhere. And I got contacted by email by Valeo here from the Czech Republic. The HR was very nice. I still remember her name. She was Teresa.

Interviewer: Is she Czech?

Interviewee: Yes. She was Czech. We had the interview in English. She was very kind. We were just chatting like friends. She just wanted to know my background. She wasn't insisting on anything. And later on, I had my second interview which was the technical one. We were talking about everything about my experience. And what I was doing for the past two years and a half. I was trying to show them as much as possible. But at that moment I don't know what happened. But I was forgetting even some basic stuff. But I was answering some bigger stuff.

Interviewer: You were nervous? Yeah, I was nervous. But it didn't impact anything. And the guy was very kind. And also Teresa was in the interview.

Interviewer: I'm sorry. I always have to check if it's recording because I get really scared. I'm so sorry. Keep going.

Interviewee: I was in the interview with Teresa and with Jakub.

Interviewer: The other guy, the technical person.

Interviewee: It was very smooth. Based on the very high kind of questions. I know that those basics just slipped under my fingers. To be honest it was quite good. At that moment I was trying to apply everywhere. So I wasn't really thinking about moving to Germany. I was thinking about moving to Germany. So I was already having some others in Germany. And when they contacted me, one week... Between the first and second interviews, there was one week. And also between the second interview the affirmation that I'm going to work with them was confirmed. So they were very quick about the process. Which I liked about them. The most difficult part was the visa. It took about four months. And I wasn't really sure how the Czech Republic will approve. If it's going to be approved or not. Because there are not much more Candidates.

Interviewer: How did you establish contact with the people in the embassy? Was it Arabic, French, or English?

Interviewee: English.

Interviewer: We got that covered. You came here for your career. Did you have an idea about the Czech Republic when you got the job and decided that you were going to take it? Or were you just starting to do research about the country?

Interviewee: I did some small research. But for me, I'm not moving here for the country. I was moving for work. So it's the most important. But when I came here it showed up that I should have thought more about the people and the country. Here in Prague, there are so many expats and people from other countries. It's the part in which any foreigner will be very comfortable. For example, some friends I have in Pilzen and in Ostrava and other places. It's not that easy. They speak only Czech. But here we speak most of the time English. So I don't have any issue with talking in English. And people here talk in English most of the time. The thing I remarked about Czech people is that they are not very welcoming. They are very introverted people. I have until now two friends. A guy and a girl. The girl works with me. We built up a relationship in just one evening. We were just talking. The vibe just went. We were friends. And the other person I met on an app. It's HelloTalk.

Interviewer: I'm familiar with the app. It's a language exchange app. It's nice.

Interviewee: Until now we have had a good relationship. The one thing I learned about Czech people is that they are introverts until they know you. And they don't open the door until they know you. This is a culture shock for me. Because more people you know. We are very warm and welcoming. Even on the street if someone just saw you in trouble they will help you. They are not going to ask. But here people are always afraid to give you support or to help you. They saw that you are here. But if you don't ask they are not going to do something. Sometimes you ask but they tell you we don't speak English. Sometimes they are a bit...

Interviewer: You mentioned two things that I want to ask you about. You mentioned the language barrier which we will talk about a bit later. But also you mentioned the culture shock of people being a bit cold or introverted. What other major culture shocks did you have to deal with once you got to the Czech Republic?

Interviewee: In food. I am a Muslim girl. So I had to deal with food. Even in bread they sometimes put pork and alcohol. Which is not possible for me. I am trying now to go to Halal Grocery. But it's difficult. Sometimes you just want to have something outside. Because my work is very huge. Sometimes we stay at work until 8 or 9 pm. It would be better for me to find somewhere where I can eat without thinking twice. Halal shops or Halal restaurants are very counted on the hand fingers. Very few. It's difficult for me

because I am living somewhere. And I am going to the other side of Prague. Or I need to go for about 45 minutes. And there are restaurants just around. I can just eat in some restaurant 10 minutes away. I need to take travel for 40 minutes sometimes just to have a meal. Because sometimes I am very tired and I cannot... You don't want to cook. You want just something ready.

Interviewer: The warmth of the people is non-existent. And also you face trouble with finding Halal food in restaurants. When you came here not knowing a lot about the culture. How did you go on about adapting the best that you can? And did you try to adapt? What were your strategies? Feeling like you are not at home but somewhat close.

Interviewee: Yes. There is an app called Meetup. I was trying to get in touch with some people. I was aiming to meet more Czech people. So that I can get in touch with more Czech people. And understand their identity and culture from their side. On the website or anything. It's not like real, like meeting real people. And also I was trying to get in touch more with my colleagues. But my culture and their culture were not very matching. Sometimes we had some dark humor about each one's culture. So I just wanted to avoid that. For the Meetup, I was doing some activities. With some other people. Like laser tag, going outside, doing some karaoke, and something. But most of them were expats. They were not Czech.

Interviewer: And you wanted to get acquainted with Czechs. Why? Because you live in their culture?

Interviewee: Yes, I live in their country. And I would like to, at least in this time that I am here. I will get to know them more. I am not planning to stay a lifetime here. So it's just a transition for me. Because of two reasons. Because of the reason of Halal. It's difficult for me here. And also for my health. Because here I have something close to asthma. Which is getting infected with cold. Interviewer: It's too cold here?

Interviewee: For me, yes. The wind. It's not about the snow. I was going out in the snow so many times. It wasn't an issue. But when the wind came. In February and in March. Then my health just down spiraled.

Interviewer: So you said it's a priority for you to get to know the Czech people. As opposed to the expats. Or do you put it in the same category? You would like to know both groups at the same time? Or is it more important for you to get acquainted with the Czechs?

Interviewee: It's more important to get to know Czechs. Because we are in their country. But the issue is that Czech people are always in groups. So it's difficult to find someone who is just going to do some activities. They have their own groups in Czech people. And they go to do their activities. Because I remarked here. Even the books, they have them in Czech. They have every kind of book. They have it translated into the Czech language. Also, I went to board gaming with some friends. And they have it in Czech. It's better to have them. But it was difficult. I was happy with my foreign group. We were having some activities. But when I got sick... Now I'm staying more at home. It's not because I want to. But I'm supposed to.

Interviewer: Did you face any challenges? Apart from the ones that we already talked about. Like the food. When it comes to the religious side. And the...hard getting into Czech groups. Are there any challenges that come to your mind? When it comes to adapting?

Interviewer: The language you said we will talk about it later. I'll ask you questions. But if you want to talk about how it's an obstacle, we can.

Interviewee: I was planning to learn at least their language. Just to be able sometimes to speak to someone in the streets. Sometimes someone doesn't speak English. They want to help you. They want to talk to you. But they don't speak English. So I was planning to start some courses. But now my company will issue some lessons in the Czech language. And it will be weekly based. I have nothing to do about this.

Because I will have some courses with my company. I think this is the first thing I can do. Otherwise, it's difficult to get into the groups. I think this is the most challenging thing.

Interviewer: You said that you are going to take Czech courses with your company. Czech language courses. Was it your initiative or was it your company's initiative?

Interviewee: It was mine.

Interviewer: It was yours? Did you ask for it?

Interviewee: Yes. So let's get to the next question. I want to ask you about discrimination. I don't want to call it racism. Maybe we can call it racism. But mostly discrimination. Do you feel like you've ever faced discrimination based on how you look? The color of your skin? What you wear? The language you speak? Whenever you're talking in Moroccan Arabic on the phone. Or English. Or because of your veil. Or whatever. Or the color of your skin. It could be anything. Do you feel like you've ever faced discrimination because you're different from the Czech people in general?

Interviewee: Yes. I didn't think so because we know that Germans are the most discriminative people. But here I found some. Mostly in hospitals. One time I had an urgent issue. I had to take a special medicine. I'm still doing a follow-up with my doctor in Morocco about my asthma. It's rhinitis. It's not asthma but it's rhinitis. It's something similar but not that bad.

Interviewer: It's just a respiratory issue? Yes. It's a respiratory issue and it gets worse with the weather. It doesn't have any relationship with... It gets worse with the dust. But here it's not that dusty and it's cool. It's clean. But with the cold, yes. When I went I had to take special medicine. And my doctor in Morocco just told me this is the one to take. Because I had some respiratory issues. It's because of the wind and the cold. I went to pharmacies and they told me that we need a prescription from the Czech Republic to be allowed to give you this medicine. At least one of them told me we need something from the European Union. If a doctor you know in France can send it to you and we can give you the medicine. But otherwise, we cannot. Then I went to another place to Dr. Max. She told me... This is good if someone asks you about it with the reference. Dr. Max in Nove Smichov helped me. She told me you can go to this hospital and they will help you. They will give you the prescription. Because I had all my paperwork from my doctor. So if they see them any doctor will approve. I went until around 10 pm. I had the prescription. And around... No pharmacy was open by that time. So I had to find another one. Dr. Max was open. And I went there and I took it. At the hospital when I was to take the prescription the girl working at the reception she was not very kind. I am not talking about Dr. Max. The hospital. I am not going to specify the name. But she was not nice. And based on some other friends' experience at hospitals they are not very nice to foreigners. As soon as they know you are from another country they start behaving differently. This is the most important. In cafes and somewhere else it's not important. But when it comes to health we are not going to a hospital just for fun. It's something that is necessary. If we need to go, we need to go. We have nothing else. We just go. Even if we get discrimination we can do nothing. But sometimes, as my friend was saying based on his experience he had a really strong flu and she was about to give him an injection just to relieve him. But when he told her he was not from Czech or something she just stopped. She didn't give him the injection. She just told him he could go out. She was supposed to do some other things but she didn't do them. They didn't help him well until he went to another hospital. It depends. There are some hospitals that are good with foreigners. There are some others that are not. Discrimination in the streets. Nowadays, when I came to Prague my friend just told me to keep my head up so that I will look at everything because the buildings at the top are very beautiful. In Morocco, I used to walk like this but when I came to Prague I used to walk like this. But with the veil, so many times I feel



like people are looking at me. For now, sometimes when I'm going to take some groceries I just keep my head down. But I'm just trying to get used to it.

Interviewer: Does that decrease the quality of your experience here? The looks that you get from people?

Interviewee: The looks can be ignored. But the hospital issues this is the most important thing that we need to work on. But you've never been verbally abused or anything?

Interviewee: No. No one abused me.

Interviewer: So you just feel that people look at you differently? Yes. Even sometimes babies they have it like... Here they don't wear a veil for any reason. So it's normal.

Interviewer: It's very alien.

Interviewee: Sometimes I understand if someone is looking just curious. But sometimes you feel the look of people. Sometimes it's not that naive because I have some people who look at me as curiosity and some babies and some children who pass by they would like that.

Interviewer: And you don't mind that?

Interviewee: It's fine. But sometimes people look at you like...

Interviewer: And that's when you feel uncomfortable?

Interviewee: Yes. If someone is looking out of curiosity, it's okay. Because I have some different things they have their own different ways. So it's okay. But if someone is staring in a strange way then it bothers you.

Interviewer: So you've been here for 5 to 6 months. Would you say you have a solid support system or a social network? Like a group of friends or people that you hang out with continuously?

Interviewee: Yes. I have my group of people who are from different countries. I have some people from Italy some people from Spain from Egypt from Pakistan from different countries. We have our own group and we do some activities like paintball, laser tag, and board gaming. We have every week two events of board gaming. Now there are three. So we can meet three times a week. We have karaoke Tuesday night. We have sometimes some fancy parties. We went to the opera together. There are so many amazing things now. They are planning for paintball and for some hiking. But now I cannot join.

Interviewer: You cannot hike.

Interviewee: Yeah, no. But I'm planning to do some travels. So it's fine. Also, I have a group of Tunisian and Libyan people. We hang out a lot. I cannot forget my Moroccan friends. We don't hang out a lot. But whenever I feel like I miss my home I just tell them let's meet.

Interviewer: Tell me about your first group of people. Where did you find them? Was it on the app that you told me about?

Interviewee: On the app. We had some board gaming and then I met someone. He was my colleague. We met at the board gaming. We didn't meet at the company but we met at the board gaming.

Interviewer: Is it on the app? What is it called again?

Interviewee: It's Meetup. Let me show you. It's this one.

Interviewer: Ok. You use this and you use the other one. HelloTalk. So those are the main apps that you use to find friends here in Prague?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you meet your Moroccan friends?

Interviewee: Before coming to here I talked to one friend. He was the first...

Interviewer: The blonde guy.

Interviewee: He was the first person I talked to in here in chat. Actually, at the same time I talked to two people. But Mehdi was the one who was really straightforward and was answering my questions. He was supportive. So I decided to not talk to the other person and follow up.

Interviewer: Are you and Mehdi from the same town or how did you find him?

Interviewee: Actually, it's a good question. Because when I wanted to find someone here in the Czech Republic I had no idea how to find someone. Because on Facebook sometimes people lie. So I don't know if they live in the Czech Republic or not. And there is no filter to look for someone in the Czech Republic on Facebook. But on LinkedIn it's possible. And I was looking for automotive engineers here in Morocco and I found none. And then I looked for engineers. And then I found two. The two I talked to you about. And Mehdi was one of them. So I found him through LinkedIn. And we were talking via LinkedIn about the process, the visa, everything. Whenever I have some questions I just ask him.

Interviewer: So Mehdi was your gateway to knowing more about Prague life, right? He was your gateway. You asked him a lot of questions. What type of questions?

Interviewee: I asked him how much time it takes to have the visa, what is the process, what is paperwork I need to do, which documents I need, and how is the rate of salary here. And also for the flights. I was asking him which airline he used to go. But we had some different experiences. So some things were applicable to me as well. Some things were not. Because we came in Covid and I couldn't find the same airlines. And I have an issue with traveling during the night.

Interviewer: You wanted a direct flight? Yes. And during the day?

Interviewee: To start from the day and end the day. I cannot land at night. But the first day I came here I landed at night. It's fine to land here at night. But to go to Morocco at night is not that easy. Interviewer: Why? Because it's safer here?

Interviewee: It's safer and you have insured transportation. With Bolt and everything. But for me there it's difficult. And also the prices are very high to go from. Because the nearest airport to my hometown is Casablanca. And from there to my home it's about 2-3 hours of driving. And it's not that easy. But here it's around 30 minutes or something. Because I'm living in Prague and I'm coming to Prague. But there I'm going to Casablanca and then I need to travel again.

Interviewer: To a smaller city. Do you mind telling me where you're from?

Interviewee: I'm from Zemamra.

Interviewer: Can you say it a little slower?

Interviewee: Zemamra.

Interviewer: Is it closer to Rabat or Casablanca?

Interviewee: No, it's in the middle of the road between El Jadida and Safi.

Interviewer: Oh, between El Jadida and Safi. Zemamra. Do you mind me asking what you identify as? Arab or Berber?

Interviewee: I'm Arab.

Interviewer: So it's really nice that you mentioned your flight here. Because I want to ask you about your first day here and your first week here. So that you can recall exactly what you did, and how it happened. Because it's really interesting for me to know how you... Because you came here without having anyone pick you up, right? You were alone.

Interviewee: But I will tell you.

Interviewer: Do you mind recalling the first day, maybe the first week, even the first month of you coming here?

Interviewee: We can go by like slots. I will try to recall one time by time. When I landed here, it was about 9 pm. So I already agreed with Mehdi before coming that they will meet me somewhere. And from the airport, they told me to come to a place where I can exchange. It's Alpha Exchange. And I came from the airport with a bolt to there. And we met. They were very helpful. They helped me with the luggage and everything.

Interviewer: Who? Mehdi and?

Interviewee: Mehdi and Mohamed and Hassan. All three of them.

Interviewer: I met Mohamed and I met Mehdi. But the third one, Hassan, not yet.

Interviewee: There are some others. I didn't meet them yet. But I know these three. Mainly I talk to Mehdi and Mohamed, whenever I need something. The other ones, I know them. I meet them sometimes. But the people I have more close contact with are Mohamed and Mehdi. They met me there. We went to do the exchange. We went to have my SIM card. They helped me to find something to eat. Because here they have adapted. Because they know when to eat and what to eat. They cook more at home. For me, I was just coming and I needed something. And we were at Palladium. At Palladium there is nothing except for some fish. Because at that time I didn't know. But I could have a pizza, for example. Pizza Margherita is fine. But they were thinking about something big. Like something with fish or... So I had it from an Asian there. It was about fish and some noodles. Then I just waved them goodbye. Because I was very tired. And I went to the hotel. I applied for a bolt again. Because I had no transportation or tickets. And I had so much luggage. So I had to go directly. I asked for a bolt. I waved them goodbye and I went to the hostel. Because my company took care of my rent for about 4 months. 2 months were fully funded by them. But the third and fourth were half.

Interviewer: So your company found you an apartment? Yes. Like a studio. Here in Zizkow?

Interviewee: In Prague 10. Because my work is around Prague 10. So they found me somewhere. And also this place many people go to. Because the company always keeps that place for employees. For newcomers coming from another country. I went to the hotel. But the thing I remember is that the hotel owner... She was not that nice to everyone. So whenever I thought that she was just me... I thought that it was personal. So the first day she told me that no one can come to visit me. No this, no this, no this. And I started looking for some rent. Because with that behavior, I couldn't stay more than...

Interviewer: It was a hotel? Just for the beginning?

Interviewee: It was like a pension.

Interviewer: So it was a pension that your company found for you?

Interviewee: Yes. A pension that I can have for 4 months. The first night was fine. I just closed everything and started preparing some things. I had my dinner. Called my family because they were so worried. And also I was trying to fix the transportation subscription. Mehdi was very open to helping me. He told me that if you really want I can help you with the subscription. But I was leaving Mehdi to the last. I always tell him and Mohamed that you are my last rescue. I'm keeping you for last. So you will just do your best to find him and if you don't... If I do everything and it's not great, I will ask for you for help. My company was already having my appointment with the Ministry of Interior on Monday. I came on Sunday night. I had an appointment at 2 pm. Interviewer: They sponsored your visa, right?

Interviewee: Yes, they sponsored my visa. At around 2 pm. So I had to go for the appointment. The next day I just woke up. I had something to eat because I had some things from my home. I had my breakfast at home and I was planning to go outside. So I went to the appointment. It was smooth. They just took my biometric data. Also, it was expected that I would meet someone from... My company is working with an

agency. The agency is taking care of the visa process. Someone from the agency was supposed to come and meet me. But I came earlier.

Interviewer: And you just went in?

Interviewee: No, I waited for some time. But I went in before the girl from the agency came. But for the second appointment, they told me to come just 10 minutes earlier. Don't come early a lot. So that the agent will help you. So I had the appointment and I went for lunch somewhere near. Then I was just trying to move somewhere. I was just hanging around, walking in the streets. Getting to get familiar that I'm in another country. And also the parks were really amazing. So I just walked... In a park and all. It was actually nice. During the whole week, I was just waking up. Going for a walk. Eating outside because I still don't have much. And I was trying to find some halal groceries and halal shops. And find somewhere to eat. That was the first week. And also the subscription for transportation. Because I was walking a lot. And the transportation, it will help me. Because I was planning to go to some castles and some places. And it was very far from Praha Ten. So it's impossible to come by walking. Or it will take me one day.

Interviewer: So this is your first week, kind of. Did you end up moving from the pension to your own apartment?

Interviewee: Well, for that reason I was trying to look for some rent. But when I talked to my company they told me that it's not possible. Because they already paid the full rent. So it wasn't possible. And for the three weeks, I was just about to work. Getting to know the work. Getting to know my colleagues. Doing the training because I had so much training. I was going out after every day. Because it was still sunlight. But soon there was less sunlight. Which is also something different for me. Because I'm more aware of the sun. And I don't know, it impacts me. Do you feel the same?

Interviewer: I get depressed during... Well, I get seasonal depression. Because the sun goes down really, really quickly. Sometimes it's 3:50. It's horrible. I totally get you. It's very different. That's really nice. You mentioned Mehdi as your last resort. But do you feel like him being here was an important part of your adaptation process? Having another Moroccan to talk to. Can you describe why you feel that way? Or how you viewed him as someone helpful? Or just like a familiar face maybe?

Interviewee: Actually, Mehdi and Mohamed, I think we met them. Their faces are not looking like real Moroccans. People mostly say that they're Brazilian. And I met Brazilian people. I know why people talk to them as Brazilians. But the most important thing I miss is the dialects. Our dialects. Sometimes I just want to meet them and just talk. Talking, meeting people. Sometimes when we are talking in English, now I'm going on autopilot. But sometimes in my down times, I just want to speak the most easy language for me. That is Darija... Sometimes it's hard for you to think in English. You have to use your brain to think in English. Sometimes you can't even pronounce the word. It's hard for you to think in English. You have to use your brain to think in English.

Interviewer: Is it sometimes too much? Does it bother you?

Interviewee: Sometimes it's too much. Also, I think I have seasonal depression as well. I don't know. I don't know. When it's not sunny. Yes. For example, if you're here for two or three days and it's sunny, it's normal. But when you don't see the sun for a long time, you feel depressed. Even the important things with Mehdi and Mohamed. When i sometimes I have a problem. I have a problem but I can't solve it. For example, change of address. Employee card. I just ask them.

Interviewer: How have your relationship with other Moroccan migrants or other migrants from your region or country of origin affected your adaptation process here? Because we talked about them so much. But now I want you to give me a final answer or maybe summarize it for me.

Interviewee: We, Arabs, we have this thing I don't know how to describe it. The people I am the most comfortable with are mostly Moroccan and Tunisian people who are close to the Moroccan culture. I feel comfortable with them. I feel comfortable discussing religious matters with them. Sometimes, there are people who accept differences. I, for example, accept differences. Sometimes I get culture shocks. That's normal. But I was always like that. It's normal. I don't get upset. But sometimes, the cold, and the discrimination, I get upset. It's a personal thing. It's a way of living. I live in a country where everyone thinks that people are cold. Even I could become cold when I go back to my country. I can't adapt. I feel like I am also becoming a cold person.

Interviewer: Do you feel like the Czech culture is rubbing on you?

Interviewee: Sometimes.

Interviewer: Sometimes?

Interviewee: Sometimes.

Interviewer: How? Why? Give me some details. Do you feel like you are a cold person? Or you don't go to people often? In the Czech Republic, we are Moroccans, we go to people in any place. In cafes, in restaurants, everywhere. We just talk to other people. That's how we make friends. Of course, respectfully. Not invading their personal space. But here, people don't really do that. Does that rub off on you? Do you feel like it's rubbing off on you?

Interviewee: In my downtimes, yes. But in my up times, it doesn't matter. I have friends that are Moroccans, Tunisians, and Egyptians. I have Arabs with me. However, it feels strange to be in a country and not befriend its people. That was the point of my coming here, to get to know a new culture and its people. I want to see how they live. Now I just meet Egyptians....

Interviewer: You told me you wanted to meet Czechs. You wanted to meet Czechs and meet their friends. You told me you have a lot of people you know who are Czechs. What are you trying to do? To meet more locals?

Interviewee: I don't know. I don't have a chance. If I meet a Czech I will be open. I will introduce myself.

Interviewer: Do you ever get welcomed into a Czech group?

Interviewee: It never happened. My colleagues never take the initiative to invite me to activities. An Egyptian colleague of mine started organizing football activities at the company and we would all participate, the expats.

Interviewer: Do you think the locals should also put some effort into welcoming expats into their culture? So we can at least access their bubble.

Interviewee: I think it's not worth it, they're cold and reserved, even when I tried to do it it got tiring. I understood it was part of their character. They're not talkative. My friend says that they're only happy when they drink beer. Other than that they're cold. I don't know how they managed to get this behavior. But yesterday we were discussing what might have happened. They were warm and everything was fine. The environment was nice. But I think that an event happened. I don't know what exactly happened. But an event happened and they didn't accept it. Even their industry was very good. Their industry was great in the 50s. In the 50s Czech was at the top.

Interviewer: Because of the invasion of the Russian army. I know all of this but I forgot. It's communism. Communism made them depressed. At least that's what we know about them. The Czech Republic was a rich country for a while. Because they are in the center of Europe. They were really wealthy. They would charge other countries to pass goods through the Czech lands. I don't know if this is what made them cold. I can't really say as a researcher. I can't have an opinion on this. I have my own opinions as a person. But right now I can't really have a personal opinion. But I think what you want to say or what your friend

meant. Is the communist era here that lasted for a long time. Maybe he thinks that's what made them depressed. I hear this from a lot of other people. That communism is what made people miserable here. Maybe that's what he meant. We don't know what communism is in Morocco. We just hear about it. Here it was something they lived with for a long time. Everything. Rules of life. Economy. Everything was dictated by communism. Maybe that's what he meant. How would you describe your relationship with your Moroccan friends here?

Interviewee: They are like brothers. If I am having trouble or if I need someone to talk to we go for coffee. I am also not an extrovert, I am introverted when I get sad or when I am down. Back in Morocco I thought I was an introvert and thought that when I would come here I would live comfortably but they are way more introverted than I'll ever be. We are all busy with our lives and our business however we are used to people asking after us and checking on us which I am missing here. So when I am down it's nice to be able to go out with my Moroccan friends and get a breather. Just a walk around the old town or Charles Bridge, it helps a lot.

Interviewer: I want to ask you a little bit about your family in Morocco How important is your family for you? Are you close or not? You don't have to go into details I just want to know if you are close Have you maintained a close relationship with them when you moved away from Morocco? Do you call them every day or week? Do they ask about you?

Interviewee: I call them every day. When I am busy I text them. we are very close Especially with my mom and my sister.

Interviewer: Were they emotionally supportive when you moved?

Interviewee: Yes, I mean even in Morocco I lived alone. So I would call them during the week briefly, and we would speak more during the weekend.

Interviewer: Do you still have a group of friends in Morocco that you're in contact with?

Interviewee: We're still in contact. Some of my friends are here in Europe, they used to work with me in Morocco. 6 to 7 girls. I visited a friend in France and I am gonna visit another friend in Dresden. I was the first one to leave.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you have a lot of support from friends?

Interviewee: I do, especially because they're all in Europe now, and it helps that Mehdi and Mohamed live here in the same city.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about the language. Do you want to keep talking in Darija?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Were you surprised by the difficulty of the language? Did you think it would be similar to the other languages you know?

Interviewee: I experienced Language shock when I was still living in Morocco. I wanted to learn the language before coming here and that's when I was surprised. I started learning on Duolingo. I have an affinity for languages and it was very different from all the languages I know. Until Mehdi told me that English would be enough, that's when I relaxed a bit. I thought I was obliged to learn. I asked the company because I wanted to learn. Even if the Czech Republic is a transit country for me I wanted to learn a little. Because at work people sit down and start speaking Czech to each other even if the company is a multinational environment. Even if they happen to be the ones that invited you to lunch they start speaking Czech. I would also hear some dark humor and comment about my diet from my colleagues, I forgot to mention it earlier but this one guy said that I only eat fish because it has no emotions, since I can't eat meat because it's not halal. I know his intentions were not bad but still. It's tiring. I would never criticize their culture. They know about our culture, and they still think it's a laughing matter.

Interviewer: Did his remark bother because you felt like he was highlighting the difference between you or was it because it happens a lot?

Interviewee: Well, the difference is clear. I think it's because it happens a lot. That remark stayed in my head. I can't say why exactly. I heard similar comments from other people. I think it's the way he delivered it.

Interviewer: Can we go back to the language learning, will you still learn the language?

Interviewee: Yes, I am waiting for my company to start the classes. We need to make a group.

Interviewer: And you want to learn Czech because?

Interviewee: So I can adapt better. I met some nice people that don't speak english, just the other day this lady was trying to help me at the shop and she spoke no english. Some Czech people are really nice, I meet them everyday everywhere. Oh I forgot to mention I noticed people don't like to sit next to me on public transport. They're hesitant. These are minor things but they accumulate. So they're either very nice or they just add to your frustration.

Interviewer: You think language will open doors for you?

Interviewee: Yes, I will be able to hold conversations and I will understand what is said around me at work. I would also not miss any information at work. When my colleagues speak they sometimes can't translate everything they're saying about the work and that makes me feel like I am missing out.

Interviewer: What are your plans for the future? So you plan on staying here? Or will you move around Europe? Are you thinking about going back to Morocco eventually?

Interviewee: As long as I am learning new things here, I will stay in the Czech Republic. But I plan to move eventually. I would like to return to Morocco eventually but for now I think I will stay in Europe. Either Germany or...it depends on my career.

Interviewer: After you finish your learning here, what are some of the factors that could influence your decision to move?

Interviewee: I would look for a country that offers halal options. I hope that I will get more options here. And my career, if I don't advance career-wise and salary-wise..I might stay here for 5 years.

Interviewer: You would like to move to a more Muslim culture-friendly environment.

Interviewee: Yes. Germany has more markets. France still has the issue with the veil. I would not remove my veil because that touches my identity. I like that Czechs have friends and family but they don't open up to friendship.

Interviewer: Are you open to small changes that you would pick up while here?

Interviewee: Absolutely, if it doesn't touch my religion I would totally go for it.

Interviewer: Do you think being religious hindered your adaptation process? Maybe it's harder while you have to abide by a religion that is not common here.

Interviewee: Yes, sometimes I get put in awkward situations. When sitting at the table when everyone is having beer and you're having orange juice. And you either get a lot of questions or some dark humor and remarks. It makes me uncomfortable. It's not always with the best intention either.

Interviewer: Can you summarize your experience here? How do you feel about your adaptation process? And what would you say to someone that will also move here? A Moroccan like yourself.

Interviewee: I started treating the locals the way they treat me. I don't put as much effort into entering their world as I used to, they don't have the notion of being kind just for the sake of being kind. Not all of them of course but most of them. With Moroccans it's effortless. We meet, talk, and hang out.

Interviewer: What about the second question?

Interviewee: As a Moroccan whether you are religious or not. You have to keep in mind that the warmth we are used to is nonexistent here. The most you will get is a Dobry den. Don't expect to make a lot of Czech friends, you will get along with expats and more likely with people from a similar culture, expect no food from back home. Career-wise it's really good, I've learned a lot here, choose who you surround yourself with, it's important to preserve your identity while you are trying to adapt, and you have to keep your core intact, if that changes that's beyond adaptation, it's becoming one of them.  
[End of Interview]

## **Hassan**

Interviewer: So I always ask people to tell me about their age, their occupation and how long have they been in Prague.

Interviewee: Okay, so I'm 27, I'm a software engineer and I've been here for almost a year and a half. I came in December 2021.

Interviewer: Okay, do you mind telling me a little about the context? How did you come to be here? How did you choose the location? Why did you move here?

Interviewee: Okay, so I was just looking for a move to Europe. Well, initially, actually, I was looking for a remote job because I was kind of tired of the work environment in my old company. So I quit my job and after a few months of applying to different countries, I had a reply from a company here. I started working for them remotely for six months. And then it was good. So yeah, we went through with the relocation process. Yeah, I relocated here.

Interviewer: So was Prague your first choice or did you have other European cities?

Interviewee: I, okay, honestly, I did not even know what Prague was before. I mean, I knew it was a city, but I had no clue it was in the Czech Republic. Yeah, I didn't know about the way it looks or anything about it.

Interviewer: So you had no idea about Czech culture?

Interviewee: No, not at all. I just, I was just like, I'm just going to go live in Europe for a few years and see how it goes. My first choice was probably the Netherlands, mostly because they had like super good tax rulings for immigrants.

Interviewer: Okay.

interviewee: And besides that, I was like, yeah, doesn't really matter as long as I'm making enough money to...

Interviewer: To live by?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, to live and not care about money, then I'm good.

Interviewer: Well, did you, so when you worked remotely for six months in Prague, did you start looking up the culture? Like, did you start looking up what Prague is?

Interviewee: Yeah, of course. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I started to try to get familiar with like the environment because people on my team were Czech. So, you know, I had to kind of understand things. I mean, things with names, for example, like for me, names were super weird because I would... Like all my team was working kind of from Prague and I was alone and they would call each other by their Czech surnames. Right. And I was like, like, yeah, I don't know who they're talking about all the time, all the time. So that was the thing that was a bit annoying at the start but got used to it quickly. Things about personality, how we're kind of more warm in Mediterranean country than here. Right. So it's like, wasn't that big of an issue, but definitely had to read about how they think or the usual Czech stereotypes.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you have any expectations?



Interviewee: About what?

Interviewer: About Prague in general or the people? So because you worked for a long time from home, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you had to relocate here after reading a lot about it on the Internet. Did you have any expectations or hopes?

Interviewee: Not really. I knew what I was getting into, kind of like I wasn't like, you know, the kind of dreamy person who's like, oh, I'm going to move, and then my life is going to change for the better or whatever. I knew it's going to be a different style of living and I will do a lot of stupid shit but I did deliver on more than I expected. Yeah, like, it was nice. Like, I don't regret it.

Interviewer: Okay, so would you say you're adapted by now or maybe like, what did you do to get adapted to life in Prague when you got here?

Interviewee: Okay, so this topic is like interesting for me because a lot of people, when they tell me to adapt, you have to do this, this, or this. And most of the things they tell me to do is basically picking up bad habits like drinking, smoking, you know, doing that kind of thing because it's easier to adapt once, you know, and fit in.

Interviewer: Oh, these are locals?

Interviewee: Yeah, locals, Brazilians in my team because there's a lot of them and they love Prague because it's so cheap and they drink all the time. Right. So, yeah, for me, I just thought I'm not going to do any of that. I would just go to events, interact with people and see how it goes. So I do think I'm pretty much integrated here in a way where like I know the city, I know how people live here and stuff. Right. And I'm kind of satisfied with my life here, but I'm still like like some people would still say that I'm not integrated, for example, because I don't speak the language. I don't do all the fun stuff they do and things like that.

Interviewer: So can we go back to the thing that you mentioned, your colleagues telling you that you need to adapt by drinking? Can you tell me a little bit more about it? How is it like a strategy for them, but for you it's a no-go, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, for me it's a no-go. Well, it's because they're like, yeah, it will loosen you up and everyone who's drinking is loosened up and you can make some friends and, you know, it's easier. And I think I noticed that when people don't have much to talk about, they just start talking about alcohol. Oh, this one day I had this amazing drink with this and mixed this, this and that, you know, and I'm just there listening. Like, for example, when we go out after work, I'm just there listening and I'm like, yeah, like this shit is boring. But they look like they're having fun talking about things like that. Right. So it's the thing that I would never understand probably, but I'm fine with it.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. So you don't drink because of religion?

Interviewee: Religion, yes.

Interviewer: Has religion come between you and, I don't know, mingling with other people that are from different cultural backgrounds?

Interviewee: Not really. Like, when it comes to like mingling with other people, I don't really care because I think maybe I would be more strict about picking up the people like that I'm actually close to and like, you know, interact with on a daily basis, for example. But for people who I just meet every now and then, who I hang out with, like maybe once a week or things like that, I don't really care. It's not a problem. Now, it is a problem when you're going out for food and there is no vegetarian option. Then it's kind of...

Interviewer: Because of the halal food?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's kind of rough. But besides that, it's like, it's fine.

Interviewer: How have you navigated the food issue? Because I know food is also a big part of... So you have not tried any type of food because they're not halal?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I haven't tried anything. I mostly cook at home. Like, there are some halal butchers, like there's like three of them in the city. So I go buy meat or I go buy fish, like from the local supermarket. Yeah, and I usually just cook or order a kebab or something like that.

Interviewer: What is the biggest challenge you faced when you just got here in Prague?

Interviewee: The biggest challenge I faced?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It could be work-related, it could be, I don't know, social life-related.

Interviewee: Well, I think, like, this is going to be weird, but I think the biggest challenge was probably how unprepared I was. I never lived alone before. And I, you know how it is when you're living with your parents. You don't really, especially as a guy, you don't pick up any of the survival skills that you should have, right? I didn't even know how to boil water when I came here.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I had a lot of learning to do in every aspect. It was fun. I had, like, you know, a lot of problems at the start, but a lot of funny problems. So for me, the challenge was probably just getting to a point where I have a daily life, like a daily routine kind of setup without things popping out of nowhere.

Interviewer: I see. I see. And what about your social networks or, like, friend groups? What does it look like? What is your social circle?

Interviewee: Well, I have, like, I met here a Moroccan guy that, I mean, you probably don't know of, Mehdi?

Interviewee: like some other guy.

interviewer: His name is Nour-eddine?

Interviewee: No, no, no, no. Nour-eddine is, like, I know Nour-eddine really well. Like, we hang out together a lot, but he's from my workplace. He's married to a Czech woman here. He's, like, a really nice guy. He's one of my favorite people ever I've ever met, to be honest.

Interviewer: He's Moroccan, right?

Interviewee: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Are most of your friends Moroccan?

Interviewee: Not really. Like, he's my closest friend here. But besides that, I wouldn't really say I made new friends. Like, I knew Mehdi before coming here, for example. I'm hanging out quite frequently with some people from a group, like, from board game groups.

Interviewer: I see. Okay. And you meet up with them?

Interviewee: Just through some meet-up. Like, there was an event on meet-up. I went to meetup.com.

Interviewer: Do you use social media to meet people a lot?

Interviewee: Not social media. Like, I mean, a lot of people here use Facebook, and I don't use Facebook at all. I just found them on the meetup.com website, if you know it. So, I've been to a few events, like some friends matchmaking events, some language exchanges, and board games. And, yeah, the people I hang out with the most are the people I met in board games. Interviewer: What nationalities are they? Are they international?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Most of them are international. Like, yeah. Yeah, like, I can't think of a single Czech person that I, like, yeah, Czech person that I think is, like, relatively close to me. Like, yeah.

Interviewer: What about your friends at work or colleagues at work? Do you socialize with them?

Interviewee: I do, I do, but then it's very limited because we work from home, so most of the time people don't go to the office. And when we do go to the office, we usually, like, go for drinks after work, and after, like, one hour people start getting tipsy, and I leave, because, you know, it's pointless to talk to someone who's starting to lose it. You know, like, you know what I mean? Like, I don't really like talking to people when I feel like they're really, like, starting to get drunk. So I stay with them for, like, an hour or two, and then, and then, like, yeah. And the thing is, most of them have their social circles already set up, like, some of them are married, some, you know, some have their own friends that do things with them. So it's hard to suggest doing plans together, for example, on the weekend, or things like that.

Interviewer: What about your Moroccan friends that you told me about? You said you're friends with your Moroccan guy that was married here.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you have any other Moroccan friends?

Interviewee: Well, there is, like, him. He's called Hussein. There's Nour-eddine that I met, like, last year, like, maybe in September or something. And then there's Mehdi and Simo, like, yeah, like. But Mehdi, I knew him before coming here. Simo I met here, and Nour-eddine I met here.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with other fellow Moroccans?

Interviewee: I, like, as I said, I'm, like, pretty close to, like, Hussein. But the others were, like, friends, you know, like, not close, not strangers, you know, that kind of vibe. Just acquaintances. Interviewer: Do they play, like, an important role in your...

Interviewee: Yeah, like, I would say Mehdi is closer. Like, Simo, for example, I can consider acquaintance. Mehdi is closer than that. And Nour-eddine, like, in between, like, you know, like, so it's hard to describe.

Interviewer: Did you feel, like, any support coming from them when you just moved here?

Interviewee: Yeah, like, I stayed at Mehdi's place for my first few days. He helped me a lot, like, showed me around the city and taught me a few things. And then when I moved on my own, I forgot about all of them and I had to start from scratch. One thing that was very useful for me, at least with Czech people, is that I found that they're very helpful when you ask them out in the street. Like, you walk up to someone and you're just like, hey, I'm lost because I was getting lost a lot. I was like, I'm lost. I'm trying to get here. I'm trying to do this or something. And they would, like, take the time to help me out. So that's positive for the Czechs, you know, like, yeah.

Interviewer: What about the language barrier? Were you shocked when you got here?

Interviewee: Yeah, I was a bit disappointed.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: Because I feel like trying to live here, speaking English, is similar to trying to live in Casablanca speaking in English. Like, some people speak English, but most people don't. That's my experience. Like, especially when it comes to daily life things, going to a barber shop, groceries, talking to a bolt driver, you know, all those kinds of things that are like... Kind of important. Yeah, yeah. People just don't speak English, like, at all.

Interviewer: How do you navigate that?

Interviewee: I picked up a few Czech words. Alright. It helps sometimes, but a lot of the time it doesn't.

Interviewer: Do you plan on learning the language or going to a language course?

Interviewee: Which courses? I plan to. Like, I already did some classes, to be honest, for three months. But I stopped.

Interviewer: Where?

Interviewee: My company was like... Paying for it? I was paying for them, but like, they were organizing it for expats. Because we have a lot of expats in the company, so they're making groups of people who want to learn Czech. And they have this, like, partnership?

Interviewer: Partnership?

Interviewee: Yes, with the school. Yeah, they just assign teachers to people who are around the same level.

Interviewer: Okay. And will you continue learning Czech?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Interviewee: I don't see myself... I mean, I don't see the point... I don't see myself living here for like ten years or something like that, you know?

Interviewer: So you see Prague as a transit country? Like, the Czech Republic is a transit country and Prague is a transit city.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. My main reason for that is, as I said, I'm not too keen on picking up their bad habits. And I feel like it would be very, very hard to have close friends that don't do those kinds of things, because everyone does, like, be it men or women.

Interviewer: But you still plan on staying in Europe, right?

Interviewee: Yes. You'll tell me I will have the same issue? In other countries?

Interviewer: I can't really tell you anything.

Interviewee: Like, probably, but I don't think it's going to be to this extent.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: Because...

Interviewer: Why do you feel like that?

Interviewee: Because there's like bigger Muslim communities in other countries.

Interviewer: Okay, so you feel uncomfortable here because...

Interviewee: Not really uncomfortable, but unfitting in a way.

Interviewer: You don't feel like you fit in?

Interviewee: Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: Because of the lack of Muslims... of fellow Muslims?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say that. Like, I'm not like super religious or like... I think I'm in between, like, the super religious and the people who don't give a shit at all. Like, I think I'm in between. But there are also, like, things like... There are, like, things that I want to have in, like, the people that would be important to me. Like, I don't know, girlfriend, wife, whatever, close friends, kind of best friends, you know. I just don't see myself, like, having a very, like, strong relationship with people who I think do... Like, they are, like, have bad habits, like, and they do them on a daily basis, you know. Because, like, drinking, smoking, the way they... I feel like people are very, like, I wouldn't say self-conscious. Is that realistic? No. I feel like people just care about themselves and that's it, you know.

Interviewer: Individualistic?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Because I feel like coming from, like, a different background, again, like, there are, like, two sides of it in Morocco, for example. But more likely than not, most of the people, like, I met through my life, for example, there... that I at least, like, had good relationships with, they're very... Like, you can't tell that you can really, like... When you're talking to them, like, they're actually listening and they care about you and you can actually, like, have some kind of connection with them. Here, I just don't feel it, like, something is not connected for some reason.

Interviewer: That's why you chose to be close with people from the same background.

interviewee: I didn't really choose, it just happened in a way.

Interviewer: How did it happen?

Interviewee: Like, for example, Hossein, for example, he is in a completely different background from me, but he's, like, literally my favorite person for now, like... And, let's say, like, I'm more... interviewer:

Can you tell me how you met him exactly?

Interviewee: I met him, like, my first day in the office was his first day at work. So, he's... he had, like, a very... he's, like... His life is weird to explain, like, he... Like, my background was basically middle class, for example. His background is dirt poor, like... Like, literally the worst you can get in Morocco, like, you probably know how it is. That's the kind of background he has. So, we like different things, we do different things, we think differently, but I feel like we're just connecting in some, like, very important way that... Like, our understanding of life, for example, is very similar, even though everything is different. So, it's easy for us to... I don't know, be friends, I guess.

Interviewer: I see. Well, can you tell me a little bit about your future plans and aspirations, like, related to Prague? Because you just mentioned that you plan to move, right? What about your future here? While you're here?

Interviewee: Yeah, so... Okay, the main reason... Okay, the day I decided to move actually was not because of these things, it's because of one big issue that I had with the language. I had to go to the emergency hospital because... Well, I had COVID, and, like, one month later I was starting to, like, get some... Every now and then get some complications. And this one day I could not breathe at all, like, since I woke up. And I thought it was gonna pass, but it didn't pass until... I don't know, it didn't pass at all, like, through the whole day. So, around, like, 12 I was like, yeah, I'm just gonna go to the hospital. It took me three hours to find a hospital that speaks English. Well, that speaks English, like... I mean, it was a Sunday, so most weren't replying when I was calling them. And those who replied, only one replied in English. I got there, and no one could speak English at the reception. So, we just couldn't understand each other. I tried to call the same number again to see if he can help me. Someone else replied, not English, and then it was like... Then, like, at that moment I felt like, yeah, this is not gonna work out. Like, I can't, you know... If something, like, really dangerous happens and I really need to be in an emergency... Like, that time it wasn't... I mean, I thought it was bad, but it wasn't that bad that time. But if something really happens and I cannot speak to a doctor or something, then... Like, yeah, it's not the ideal situation to be in, I guess.

Interviewer: I see. And you will... So, you said you will move to the Netherlands?

Interviewee: Like, I don't know yet.

Interviewer: Will you put more effort into learning the language then?

Interviewee: No. No. Because I thought it just wasn't worth it.

Interviewer: No. So, will you try to learn, for example, Dutch when you go to the Netherlands? Or would you just count on them speaking English there?

interviewee: I will probably just speak English. Because it's way more English-friendly than here, so, my two options that I'm thinking of right now are basically the Netherlands and Sweden. I've been to Sweden a few... I mean, once. And I'm going there tomorrow again. And even babies speak English there, so... I think it should be fine.

Interviewer: So, there are no factors that could influence your decision to stay here?

Interviewee: I can't really think of anything at the moment.

Interviewer: Even career-related?

Interviewee: No, not really. I mean, in my career, changing jobs isn't that big of a deal. It's pretty easy. You just need to do a few months of prep and then you're good. So, yeah, I don't really think career... In a way, career is my lowest priority in life right now. I've considered coming here as a vacation. A long-term vacation, but a vacation nonetheless. Because the thing I appreciate, at least, is the difference in work culture here compared to Morocco. My job in Morocco is very micromanaged, very time-consuming. But they care more about the amount of time you spend working than what you actually deliver. You know, that kind of thing. So, I didn't really like that. I really like my job right now. So, if I had a job that was similar to the one I had in Morocco, I would definitely not be here at all. So, yeah, the biggest factor of me being here is my job for now. I think I'm going to change it at some point.

Interviewer: And what about your relationship with Morocco? Do you go back there quite often?

Interviewee: I went back for the first time in Ramadan. So, after one year and four months or something, I went there. I spent the whole month of Ramadan in there. And then I had picked up an injury while being in here, on my wrist. And I was trying to get it checked here. And same issue, I called my doctor. She directed me to someone that speaks English. Well, allegedly speaks English. I went there and talked to him. He completely misunderstood everything I told him. Just x-rayed the... I'm like, yeah, you're fine. There's nothing. He refused to give me any prescription, even a day off. Even though I couldn't use my computer for a week and things like that. When I went back to Morocco, I went basically to deal with this issue with my wrist. And that was, again, just reinforcing my point about it being impossible to... For me to live here long term, because of it.

Interviewer: Did your family play an important role when you came here? To help out emotionally?

Interviewee: No. I think I'm pretty strong emotionally. I don't get lonely and be like, oh shit, I wish I was with my family. I do miss them, but for me, it's not a factor at all.

Interviewer: What kind of advice would you give to another Moroccan that would like to move here? What should they take into account? That's really important.

Interviewee: Well, lifestyle first. And see if the lifestyle of the people here fits with theirs. I know I'm in a quite edged case. A lot of people are very open and they love the European lifestyle. I know they would love it here. People like me, not so much. I met a few Egyptians who are like me. And they're also struggling with things that I'm struggling with. And I also met some Egyptians that are loving it here because they don't care. I think my advice would be to just see the lifestyle. If it fits with what the lifestyle of the people here is. If it fits with what they want to be doing on a daily basis or a weekly basis or whatever. Deciding if they just want to get some good experience. I think Prague is good for that. To see how people live in Europe in general. To travel around because there are good places to see around here. Or if they want to look for a place to settle in long term. Then I think they also need to look at that. Start learning the language. Because I think if you want to live here long term you definitely need the language. Or be with someone who speaks the language. Have someone close to you, like a girlfriend or something who speaks the language. And can help you through all of these things.

Interviewer: Did you have any culture shocks? Or things that made you a little bit... I don't know. Weird?

Interviewee: Weird compared to the culture? Yeah, yeah. Like for example, going to the gym. You see in the bathroom, change room, whatever. When you go to change your clothes. People just get naked completely. We don't in Morocco. So like for some... Yeah, I'm just gonna lower my head. Change my clothes and get out of here as soon as possible. As soon as possible. You know, people being quite... I don't know the word for it. But you know, people touching each other outside in the street. I've seen that many times.

Interviewer: Yeah, public display of affection?

Interviewee: Yeah, I wouldn't call it affection. I wouldn't call it affection. Affection is like hugging and things like that. They're getting very sexual publicly. That definitely was a weird thing as well.

Interviewer: What else?

Interviewee: Not much. The rest I expected to be honest. I knew about the rest and it wasn't really a culture shock. I think... Yeah, maybe... I don't know if I should say this. I feel like we have higher standards for food in Morocco.

Interviewer: Absolutely, you should say anything you want.

Interviewee: Yeah, I really feel like it. A lot of other Interviewees talked about food a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah, and I feel like here they're happy with whatever they get. Everything is good. Even the weirdest things, they like it. Eating things like raw meat for example. That I found weird. How frequently they drink. Even at lunch, they get beers to go with their food. Small things like that I guess. But it's not really a big issue for me.

Interviewer: Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you would like to mention? Your personal experience with Prague as a city. Mostly Prague as a city because I've checked that Czech Republic is such a small country. But I'm really interested in your relationship with the city.

Interviewee: I like it to be honest. I think it's a really nice city overall. Despite everything I've said. I think it's a really nice city. It's very safe relatively. Especially compared to where we come from. I think it's safe. The weather is a bit weird but it's not super hectic. Like in some other countries. I'll take the example of Sweden. I've seen rain, sun, and thunder at the same time. Literally at the same time. Here the weather is at least consistent. It's either shit or good. But it's consistent. The transportation is really good in the city. That's the thing that I like. The construction looks good. Better than most of the places I've seen in Germany for example. What else? Nature, all the stuff. I really like the city overall. The city comes with the people. Yes.

Interviewer: I don't have any more questions for you. If you think of anything that you want to add?

Interviewee: As I said, I probably said a lot of bad things. But despite all of that I'm still not very... I'm not really dissatisfied with my experience here. Otherwise, I would have left.

Interviewer: So you still find good things to hang on to.

Interviewee: Yes, it's just harder to think of I guess.

Interviewer: I see. Well, we're going to wrap it up.

[End of Interview]

### **Azzedine**

Interviewer: can you state your name, age, and how long you've lived in Prague?

Interviewee: my name is Azzedine, I am 29, and I came here in 2017, so 6 years.

Interviewer: what was the context of your move from Morocco to the Czech Republic?

Interviewee: it was this thing with photography school, I decided to come study photography here and I got help from a Czech lady, she would come there to organize excursions in Agadir and we got to know each other, she was the one that talked to me about the school and we settled.

Interviewer: did you have an idea about Prague and the culture here before your move? Or was it an opportunity that you took without thinking?

Interviewee: I just took the opportunity, I had this mentality, that god's earth is all green hahaha, Morocco or here, no issue

Interviewer: did you experience any culture shocks when you got here?

Interviewee: yes, many culture shocks.

Interviewer: can you tell me about your early days here

Interviewee: my early months here were like tourist months, I just enjoyed life here but then it started becoming harder, to integrate, like the language, integrating with others without the language, I spoke a bit of French and very little english like 5%, so I went to IC Praha if you know it?

Interviewer: the integration center?

Interviewee: yes, that one. I took some language courses.

Interviewer: for how long?

Interviewee: I did two courses, first 3 months and then 2 months, then I managed on my own.

Interviewer: so that was the major culture shock you suffered from when you got here?

Interviewee: the language yes.

Interviewer: are there some other things that were strange compared to Morocco?

Interviewee: well, their culture we have a different culture. Like the holidays we have different celebrations so that made me feel a bit alienated.

Interviewer: did you have any plans to adapt, like some ways to meet people and get used to living here?

Interviewee: I had a lot of hobbies back in Morocco, I had a lot of friends too, and I thought it would be the same here but it's quite different if you want to hang out with someone you need to schedule it in advance and it always clashes. So I didn't have a plan, but working helped me a lot, when you work with the locals, you integrate with the culture.

Interviewer: what's your current occupation if I may ask?

Interviewee: I am a barber.

Interviewer: do you work with Czechs?

Interviewee: I have an Albanian colleague and I am the only Moroccan there. I worked elsewhere. At the theatre close to here.

Interviewer: the lady that helped you relocate, was she in constant contact with you, did she help you or did you go your separate ways?

Interviewee: we were friends at first, and then we got married, and yeah we're still married officially but we're not really close.

Interviewer: did she play a big role in your adaptation when you just got here?

H: not that much, she was very busy with work and I was only working part-time. She worked full time so I would only see her at night. We would make some plans, we'd go to historical monuments and on some trips around the Czech Republic. I guess she did play a part. My mother-in-law took over when it comes to helping, she would try to teach me Czech and she helped me financially, she also invited us to Christmas dinner and we would watch old Czech movies. We have a great relationship.

Interviewer: what about the people surrounding you at the moment? What's their background?

Interviewee: well I avoid friendships with Arabs, it can be problematic. I have two close friends a Moroccan and an Algerian, the rest are from everywhere like France, the US, Spain, and of course some Czech.

Interviewer: which language do you use to communicate with internationals?

Interviewee: I try to use my very bad english and I use Czech with the locals.

Interviewer: how's your Czech by the way?

Interviewee: I can communicate.

Interviewer: you didn't feel the need to find friends from your own country?

Interviewee: well at first not really, I did leave Morocco so... I did meet some Moroccans and they weren't the nicest. So I know some but it's superficial.



Interviewer: Do you currently have a support system that helps with your adaptation here?

Interviewee: We make some plans, my Algerian friend teaches me Czech, and my other Moroccan friend and we do hang out. So yeah they help.

Interviewer: so you use your friendship to practice the language?

Interviewee: yes, and I also practice with clients. It really does help. Also, I don't feel like I need friends to help me integrate.

Interviewer: so what helped you?

Interviewee: figuring out if I like the landscape and the weather. I just keep an open mind, I celebrate their holidays, like Christmas and I also cook some Czech dishes. I don't have an issue with these things I am very flexible.

Interviewer: have you built some friendships with some locals?

Interviewee: I have two friends, I met one of them through photography and the other at the salon, he was my client. So we hang out from time to time.

Interviewer: are you open to getting to know their culture, maybe getting introduced to some new things?

Interviewee: I did in my first year, and I think I've been introduced to a lot of things. I struggled a lot with the language at first. It was hard not to understand things happening around me. And it was hard not being able to participate in conversations. So I enrolled in the courses to help myself.

Interviewer: was it hard to find a job when you came here?

Interviewee: not really, I worked at the theatre at first as an assistant, and then I switched to working at the salon. When I worked at the theatre that also helped me with the language because when I started I spoke no Czech. I stayed there for four years. And then I was contacted by the salon owner and started working there. At first, I was hesitant because the owner is a Tunisian.

Interviewer: have you ever had any negative experiences here?

Interviewee: not really, some of my acquaintances tell me they've had some bad experiences but nothing bad ever happened to me.

Interviewer: And what about your future plans? Do you plan on staying here or will you move?

Interviewee: Actually I wouldn't mind going back to Morocco, even if the quality of life is better here. I would like to go settle there eventually. But I also have no issue moving to China, I am very open. However, I like Morocco better because I like living amongst friends, I have really good relationships, and family as well. I also miss the beach and surfing, and it's not possible here.

Interviewer: So you're still close to family and friends?

Interviewee: yes and I visit every year, I wish I could visit more.

Interviewer: Have you noticed some changes within yourself after living here for a long time?

Interviewee: well I learned how to be orderly, people here don't throw trash on the ground, and also the parties here. When I go to Morocco I try to organize parties like the ones we have here.

Interviewer: Have you faced any challenges concerning the food, a lot of people mentioned finding it hard to eat halal.

Interviewee: I am not that religious, I do believe in god but it's mostly a cultural thing. I just don't like the quality of their meat compared to Morocco. I have some friends, the Algerian ones, we only go to Halal restaurants. Oh, I forgot to mention something, I got my first job through my wife because she worked for the same company, and she also provided accommodation we lived together, I also mentioned my mother-in-law, she's very open-minded and she helped a lot. She got me books.

Interviewer: If you were to give advice to a fellow Moroccan that will be relocated to Prague like yourself?

Interviewee: I'd say stay away from things that would hurt you and keep an open mind, go out, go on trips, get to know people.

[End of Interview]

## **Mustapha**

Interviewer: Please state your name, your age, and how long you've lived in Prague.

Interviewee: My name is Mustapha, I am 32 years old, and it's been a year and two months.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the context of your move to the Czech Republic?

Interviewee: Do you want me to tell you briefly or...

Interviewer: No, take your time, and go into details if you'd like.

Interviewee: My experience was a bit weird, I worked as a tour guide in Fez for almost three years. There was a Czech woman that would take people from the Czech Republic to Morocco. I worked with her for two to three years. She would bring clients to the little Riad I worked at, her clients would stay there, and while she'd take them on tours outside I'd accompany her. After a year and a half of working together, we discovered that we have a lot in common, and we started a relationship. This would continue for three years, she'd bring her clients and we would organize tours together. Then we decided to get married.

Interviewer: Is this woman your current wife?

Interviewee: Yes, she's my current wife. she's Sofia's mom.

Interviewer: So you met your wife at your job, and then you guys decided to get married. Did you guys live in Morocco before coming to settle here?

Interviewee: We did stay for 6 months with my family in the south.

Interviewer: Where are you from originally, if I may ask?

Interviewee: I am from a city called Erfoud, located in Eastern Morocco, it's a very small town.

Interviewer: So you visited your family for a while then came to settle here?

Interviewee: Afterwards, because it takes a lot of time for the papers to get ready, she returned to the Czech Republic and I to Fez for work, then once I got my visa I joined here.

Interviewer: How did you guys communicate, which languages does she speak?

Interviewee: We spoke French. She speaks French, English, Czech, and Slovak.

Interviewer: Can you recall your first week here in Prague? tell me about it.

Interviewee: Oh, that week was the hardest, that first day I could say was extremely difficult. I got here on the eighth of March 2022, my wife was working and she had left our daughter Sofia to her mom in Slovakia. On my first day here, I had to travel to get our daughter from Slovakia the very next day because my wife was busy with work. I had no idea about the language or the country...that week was difficult. I had no idea how to get there, which transportation to use, which trams to get on, not everyone speaks English, and even when they do speak it they don't bother, you know the deal. It's not easy to communicate with people. So I got my daughter and I got back the day after, my wife is constantly at work and I stay at home.

Interviewer: may I please interrupt, when you got here did you have accommodation ready?

Interviewee: Yes, my wife took care of that. We already had a place to stay. When I arrived last year, the first week of March, it was Ramadan if you remember. I stayed with Sofia the whole day, taking care of her, her mom was working. I need a lot of things, like going out to get things while taking care of my daughter, and how to communicate with people, that first week was very difficult.

Interviewer: How did you communicate with people?

Interviewee: I used English, and sometimes when you try to use English with some people they had no idea what I was trying to say so I'd have to use my phone to translate what I wanted.

Interviewer: What plans did you have when you go here, were you looking for a job, or planning to pursue some kind of education? Maybe learn the language first? Can you tell me how you occupied yourself?

Interviewee: I planned to find work immediately after I settle in. I was waiting for Ramadan to end and then I started to look. When I was looking for employment I faced an issue related to the nature of my visa, even if I came here after getting married they only gave me an initial visa of three months. Employers couldn't give me work because of that, I had to wait for my residency permit. After I got my residency permit I found a job at a hotel, that's my current job.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit about your work?

Interviewee: With pleasure, I work at a hotel very close to here as a porter, I take care of people's luggage. Finding a job was not hard at all, and that helped me settle, they quickly accepted me, and I had to go through an interview and was selected for the job. It's nice, people rest me and treat me well at my job. I make efforts to communicate and be on the same page because some people at work don't speak English.

Interviewer: At work, you use English to get by?

Interviewee: English, yes. I started learning some Czech and that's it.

Interviewer: After your marriage and relocation here, do you feel like your spouse played a big part in your settlement into Prague life? I talked to a few people that relocated after marriage and they all mentioned that their wives played an important role in acquainting them with their new environment, they helped them find mosques and halal food shops, etc.

Interviewee: She played a pivotal part and she is still playing it now. Without her, I wouldn't have stayed here for a year. Even if this does not count as a long period. She did help me find a mosque and places where to eat, what I forgot to mention is that she was the one that found me my current work, since she works in tourism she has contacts in a lot of hotels, it was thanks to her that I got the job so easily.

Interviewer: Do you feel like English is enough to communicate effectively at your current work, do you think your environment and the people around you are pushing you to learn Czech?

Interviewee: At my job, it's not an obligation to learn Czech, however, I was told it would be a big advantage if I made efforts towards acquiring the basics for effective communication. For example, some clients don't speak English, you need to be able to communicate with them because you need to for example take their car keys to repark the car or take care of their luggage. However, until now nobody at work is obliging me to do anything, I am free to use whichever language I am comfortable with.

Interviewee: You don't feel uncomfortable while being surrounded by people that speak a language you don't? Do you feel like that's enough of a push for you to make efforts toward learning Czech?

Interviewee: there's this saying about knowing the language of a nation allowing you to avoid their wrath. I don't feel the pressure from my surroundings, however, I live amongst these people and I have a future here because of my daughter that was born here and will grow up here and get an education here. I feel I have to learn the language, not because of outside pressure but because I will eventually need it to communicate with my child, to understand what's happening around me, and to integrate better with these people.

Interviewer: Did you have an idea about the cultural differences between Morocco and the Czech Republic or did you think of the country as a part of Europe? Did your spouse inform you about these cultural differences?

Interviewee: At first I had no idea about Czechia. I knew about many European countries however it was the first time I would hear about the Czech Republic and Slovakia. When I got to know my wife, I did a bit of research about the country and found out that it's a small nation in Eastern Europe, when I looked at it I didn't find much apart from it being a famous tourist destination, I couldn't find details about the culture or traditions. You'd have to come here and witness it for yourself. When I got here I was shocked, I understood that it would not be easy to integrate with these people.

Interviewer: Why would it not be easy?

Interviewee: For me, the language was the first obstacle, this language is extremely difficult, you try and try and make efforts. English, Spanish, and Italian are all languages that you can learn if you put in the effort. The language here was the first obstacle, you can't... I had issues with orientation and transportation as well. I didn't know how to use the transportation. It's hard to integrate, for me at least. It's hard to gain people's trust here unless you work on yourself. They're like that here, it's hard to gain their trust.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on that, please?

Interviewee: As I see it people here are weary, they don't trust easily. For example, I know my wife very well, she's a smart, very competent individual, she's got a Ph.D. and speaks multiple languages. It's very hard to gain her trust, she does not trust you immediately even after months of knowing you, she always thinks that harm might come to her through people she barely knows. I think that most people from this country don't give up their trust easily.

Interviewer: Did you have any culture shock after your arrival here? Did you notice something wildly different from your country of origin?

Interviewee: I would say that for me there wasn't anything weird that doesn't exist elsewhere, it's all normal.

Interviewer: Did you have a plan on how you were going to adapt once you settle into life in Prague, or were you more spontaneous about it?

Interviewee: Exactly, I had no plan in advance. I was thinking I had to find a job, mingle with these people to integrate, and put in the effort. With time, little by little, I knew I would figure it out. So no, I did not plan a strategy when I was still in Morocco.

Interviewer: Can we go over the efforts you put in to integrate, can you list them for me and tell me more about the process, apart from finding your current job can you tell me a bit more about things that you did to make yourself feel more at ease here?

Interviewee: The first challenge I faced when I settled here was how to acclimate to my family life. You know how traditionally, men don't take care of newborns, even if the woman works it's hard for us to accept taking care of the baby for half of the time. It was hard for me to accept. So the first challenge I faced was taking care of my baby daughter. I have 3 days off per week and I spend them with Sofia since my wife has to work. It does not matter if you're fasting or not, if you have plans or not, you need to be awake at 7 in the morning and watch over her for the entire day until her mom returns home. This is the most important change I subjected myself to adapt to family life, I call them sacrifices, with Sofia I get a bit tense sometimes because I have to take care of her, change her, feed her, and take her out. This is the first thing I did to integrate into the family lifestyle. When it comes to social interaction with people outside, it is in my nature that is a bit angry, back in Morocco when you get into a disagreement with someone it's normal to get into loud arguments, it is different here, you can't fight people here even if they insult you, so you have to look for something to calm yourself down. At work for example, if a client does not like your service, it's a possibility for them to say a mean word or be unpleasant, and you cannot

reciprocate. You might get provoked outside, for example, this one time my daughter my wife, and I was out, and I got intercepted by a homeless person asking me for cigarettes, you know there are a lot of homeless people around here, they didn't respect the fact that I was with my family they just singled me out to ask me for cigarettes, I don't have the right to touch this person, so I have to get rid of my anger. Apart from these things I didn't face any major difficulties to coexists with these people.

Interviewer: I wanted to enquire about your experience with discrimination or prejudice based on your nationality or background during your stay here.

Interviewee: No never, at all. Until now at least.

Interviewer: Some of my other respondents reported experiencing hostility or outright racism. Did something like that ever happen to you?

Interviewee: I was never treated with racism or discriminated against. Sometimes people pass you by and spit right next to you, it happened to me multiple times, I think it's the norm here and part of the culture. They all do it and I don't think it's a hostile act. Until now I never like I was treated unfairly.

Interviewer: Can we talk a bit about the people that currently surround you here in Prague? Are your friends mostly Moroccans, maybe they're Czech? Or maybe they are from other nationalities? How did you come to make friends and meet people?

Interviewee: I don't have a large circle of friends. Apart from my family, I have 4 friends and they are all Moroccan. These are the people I got to meet and make friends with within the span of a year and a half. When I got here, I had no social circle for almost 8 months, until I got contacted through Instagram by another fellow Moroccan that found me through the group. He was new here and asked to meet. We got coffee together and through this guy, I met the others. Although he came here after I did he introduced me to the others. So I have four friends, I consider them like brothers, we share meals and spend time together. Four Moroccan friends and my family, apart from them I don't have anyone else.

Interviewer: Are you content with having an exclusively Moroccan circle? Are you curious about making friends from other nationalities, maybe locals?

Interviewee: I don't see a problem with that. Currently, there's the language obstacle, I don't think I would be able to forge strong relationships with Czechs. I have my colleagues, and there is mutual respect between us, however, the language obstacle is there. I think if I improve my language skills when I will be able to speak Czech in the future I will be able to form friendships with the locals.

Interviewer: You mentioned that your relationship with fellow Moroccans is good, how's your relationship with your family back home? Are you in constant contact, did you reach out a lot when you made the move, do you go back to Morocco since you relocated to Prague?

Interviewee: I have a very good relationship with my family and my country. It's still the same if not better since I talk to my mother and sister, they lived together after my sister lost her husband and my father passed. They share a home. Since I came to Prague until now, I speak to them daily, twice or three times. I have other siblings that I reach out to from time to time, however, I speak to my sister and mom the most. I did go back to Morocco last October and spent fifteen days at home with my mother and sister.

Interviewer: Did you take your daughter with you?

Interviewee: No, I went alone. She was too little to travel without her mom. And my wife couldn't join the trip because of time constraints. I spent quality time with my family and maintain a great relationship with them.

Interviewer: Do you still have a social circle of friends back home?

Interviewee: I used to have many friends. We don't speak as much after I moved here. I speak to some of them once in a while. When I went back to Morocco the last time I visited I couldn't meet all of them, I

could only see two people and have coffee with them. So it's true that emigration alienates you from your friends in Morocco.

Interviewer: Is it important for you to be able to go back every year to see Morocco?

Interviewee: Yes, it's important to go back every year. I think it's necessary.

Interviewer: Will you take your daughter to visit as well when she grows a little?

Interviewee: Inshallah, next year she will accompany me to Morocco.

Interviewer: you mentioned having constant contact with your family by phone, were they supportive of you or did they play an important role as moral support when you weren't able to make friends for the 8 months? I know your wife works full-time...

Interviewee: Yes, indeed. Both they and my brothers played an important role. They would always call and be supportive. One of my brothers was telling me I shouldn't lose hope since I wasn't yet working at the time. He thought that I might get the idea of going back to Morocco if I crack under the stress. They were constantly motivating me to look for a job, and reassuring me that everything will be okay. And they were right.

Interviewer: What were the challenges you would recount to your family over the phone if you don't mind me asking?

Interviewee: I would complain about the difficulties I encountered while taking care of my daughter, that my wife was not the best at cooking, so I had to do that for myself and the baby. I was also complaining about not having friends or not knowing my way around the city. I would tell them about minor things like not knowing where to find entertainment or not knowing where to shop. I shared all the struggles I was going through with them.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about the struggles you went through early on when you relocated if anything else comes to mind?

Interviewee: I struggle with cooking, I have to cook for myself every day. I also didn't know where to go out and which people to hang out with. Last year, the cold was also a problem, I am not used to the cold. The cold here is extreme, I would go out and then back inside immediately. I would complain to my family about the cold. The cold was a lot. And there's no sun.

Interviewer: We already spoke about the language barrier being one of the biggest challenges you faced after relocation. You mentioned that you were in the process of learning, how are you going about that? Do you rely on communication with the people around you, did you take some classes? Or do you rely on speaking to your wife in Czech at home?

Interviewee: I do speak to my wife in Czech at home, she puts effort into teaching me. The last time she went to Morocco she got me a book for Czech Arabic learning. I used it and think it's quite good, I learned words and vocabulary and noticed that with the help of this book I could speak a bit of Czech, not fluent of course but I would be able to converse. It's effective because it's in my mother tongue. My wife also puts effort into giving me a two-hour lesson once a week at home to teach me grammar. Since she is willing to help me at home I don't think it's necessary to take language courses. I also have my book, I just need to put effort into it.

Interviewer: Can we talk a bit more about your work environment, you mentioned what you do. I want to know more about the overall atmosphere that you experience at work. Are you happy at your current job? What's your relationship like with your colleagues? Do you plan on staying at your current position long-term?

Interviewee: I like my job. I am very happy. People are nice to me there. At the hotel where I work, there are four porters. I am a Cuban, a Czech, and a Slovak. We all respect each other. I think that I will have to

change jobs in the future because I think the salary is too low compared to the efforts I am putting in. I think I would look for the same job at another hotel.

Interviewer: Can we go back to the reason you relocated, when getting married to a Czech woman, did you account for the cultural difference that might characterize your union with someone from a different background? You were the one that had to change countries and get acquainted with a new environment.

Interviewee: luckily, I think that my wife and I aren't that different even if she's Czech. Before getting to know my wife on an intimate level, she was already organizing tours in Morocco and visiting the country. She also settled in Morocco for a while before our meeting. So because she speaks a bit of Arabic.

Interviewer: She speaks Arabic?

Interviewee: Yes, she also converted to Islam. She officially did with papers and all in Fez. She spent seven to eight years in Morocco before we met. She knows a lot and she likes Moroccan culture, when I came here I saw that she dresses in Moroccan fashion, she has a Moroccan teapot and glasses. Many things that I thought I'd need when I came here, she already had. I think she makes an effort into understanding my culture just like I make an effort into understanding hers. The challenge is integrating outside of my home. I feel like with my family, I would just need my mom and siblings and it will be exactly like home.

Interviewer: You just mentioned some of the things your wife does to get closer to Moroccan culture, whether it is through culinary choices or fashion choices. Can we talk about the efforts you put into getting close to her culture? And how do you view her culture in general, can you describe her culture?

Interviewee: I would say her culture is a mix of the two. I think she learns more about Moroccan culture, I don't think there's a massive difference between the two of us. I think she puts in more effort towards my culture, she loves Morocco, she worked there and made friends there. I am not sure if she does all of this for me, or if it's a personal preference. I think she just fell in love with the culture of Morocco, and she does all of it for herself. She also speaks Arabic and French so we can communicate. I would have found it to be an issue if she didn't speak French and only spoke Czech. That would make me think we're too far apart.

Interviewer: Do you ever talk about the future, are you planning on staying here in Prague? Will you stay here temporarily or will you stay here for good? And are planning to ever go back and settle in Morocco?

Interviewee: When it comes to going back to Morocco, I will visit my family. Settling there again is out of the question. When it comes to our life here, for now, we're settled and quite content with life here. We have plans for the future, we may move from the Czech Republic if we find better work opportunities elsewhere.

Interviewer: Have you already decided on a country? Or are you still not sure?

Interviewee: we'll see, we talk about moving to either Italy or Switzerland.

Interviewer: So, your carriers would be the incentive for you to move?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there something that would keep you here?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: You mentioned that your social circle now is exclusively Moroccan, would you try to make friends outside of your nationality if you were able to get over the language barrier?

Interviewee: Currently, I don't see an issue with my friends being exclusively Moroccan. I wouldn't mind even if I lived my entire life here. This does not mean that I don't know any Czech people, I do, from work and even my neighbors, we briefly converse, however, our conversations are superficial and we never get to get to know each other on a personal level because of the language. I think that once I get a

grip over the language I will be able to have Czech friends, maybe even superior in number to my Moroccan friends.

Interviewer: So the language barrier for you is the thing you plan to improve on the most. You think learning Czechs will allow you to make more friends and get a better job. Can you tell me about your relationship with your home country and your Moroccan identity? Since you moved to a new country and you're getting acquainted with a new culture, have you noticed some changes?

Interviewee: The thing is, I am very proud of my Moroccan roots. This is a no-brainer. Like every other country Morocco has its ups and downs. I didn't leave the country because I have a problem with the country, I love the country and my family lives there. However, I found I have a future here so I relocated here. I found that the Czech Republic has some things that are better than Morocco, and that's to be expected. There are a lot of changes, some characteristics that you can have in Morocco and live normally like being an angry person and starting fights, here you cannot do that because the culture is different. I noticed that I changed for the better, and I am happy with that. Of course, there are challenges and suffering, but this allows you to work on yourself and change things for the better.

Interviewer: What other changes have you noticed in yourself?

Interviewee: In Morocco, I used to drink every day. Now I don't anymore. I can't do that because I have my family now and I take care of my daughter. I stopped doing a lot of harmful things. I feel like I became a better person.

Interviewer: Would you say you changed because of the environment, or the newfound family life and responsibilities? You mentioned that you had to adjust to taking care of your baby, and that was a bit of a culture shock to you because you're used to a society that thinks the mother is the one that takes that responsibility.

Interviewee: Exactly, I had to adjust to family life and get used to taking care of my daughter. That needed a bit of sacrifice from my end. My daughter needs me so I have to be there for her. When I am working I spend twelve hours there, if not I have to be home with my child and I don't have the time to go out or do much. The agreement and engagement that is marriage pushed me to change a lot. Especially if you have children, you have to work on yourself.

Interviewer: If you were to give guidance to a Moroccan that will come and settle in Prague what would you advise them, what are the things they should pay attention to for better integration?

Interviewee: The first thing I would advise them to do is to learn the language. If they can they should start learning before even coming here and put effort into practicing before they come. If they come here not knowing the language they should try and find a place to study it. That will help with finding work. The second thing is not to trust the locals.

Interviewer: Why not?

Interviewee: I don't trust Czechs. I like them and respect them, however, I don't trust them fully. I noticed they are nice to your face but gossip when you're not there.

Interviewer: Do you trust Moroccans?

Interviewee: I do, I have no issue trusting them. My wife advised me to not fully trust people around me.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what she said?

Interviewee: She instructed me not to trust people a hundred percent. I notice that at work sometimes while I speak to the receptionist, she sparks up conversations with another colleague of ours while being all smiley and nice, once the colleague leaves she immediately badmouths her. This is an example among many. So I'd say study the language and be careful with the Czechs



Interviewer: Would you ever put the same enthusiasm as your wife did towards Moroccan culture? Would you be open to more acculturation?

Interviewee: Back in Morocco I never thought I would change as much as I did now. In a year and two months, I changed a lot, more than I ever thought I would. I think I will continue to change and evolve.

Interviewer: You have no issues with acculturation and adopting other aspects of the culture that is surrounding you now? Even if they are different from what Moroccan culture is about.

Interviewee: I have no issues with changing things that will help my family dynamic, that will help my integration in this country, I of course can't change my principles, like my religion and my love for my family, that is unwavering and will always stay the same. My love for my country as well, that will stay the same. I will always go visit. I can't let go of these things, they are close to my heart and won't change, other than that I am open to change.

Interviewer: Would you consider changing some of your characteristics to better fit in?

Interviewee: I would change a negative characteristic about myself. I would never change how I speak, or how I dress.

Interviewer: You mentioned religion earlier, did you have an idea about what the Czech Republic is like in that regard? They're not a religious nation at all, they actually have one of the highest percentages of atheists, what was it like finding out that your new environment has a completely different religious landscape?

Interviewee: I didn't know that until later. I would consider that to be a challenge. Another aspect I struggle with is the food. When I am working the whole day at the hotel, I have a short lunch break so I either have to bring my lunch from home or eat at the hotel. Apart from salad which would not be enough, I can't have anything filling because all the sandwiches and burgers have porc in them. I don't consume that and I never will.

Interviewer: Speaking of religion, was it easy to find a mosque where you could pray?

Interviewee: at the start of Ramadan my wife knew this Turkish lady married to a Moroccan and they showed us, it's very close to where we live, 10 mins away.

Interviewer: Did you face any other challenges related to religion?

Interviewee: Last Ramadan was a bit tough with work, and this one as well. Apart from that I can't recall any hardships.

Interviewer: Do you try to connect with other Moroccans amidst these religious holidays?

Interviewee: I do, we break our fast together. My friend has a falafel restaurant, we gather there when we're not working.

Interviewer: Is there anything else about your experience that we have not covered in this interview that you feel is important for me to know?

Interviewee: I don't think so, I haven't been here for that long so I don't have that many experiences. If I recall something I will tell you. With time I think I will get to experience a lot.

[End of Interview]

### **Nour-eddine**

Interviewer: Can you tell me your name, age, occupation, and how long you've been in Prague?

Interviewee: My name is Nour-eddine, I am a team leader, 37 years old, for a year now.

Interviewer: A year that you're here in Prague, How did you come here? How did you decide to leave Morocco and come to the Czech Republic?

Interviewee: I came from Hungary.

Interviewer: So, you lived in Morocco, then Hungary and then you came here?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So you were already in contact with Europe before coming here?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: How long have you been living in Hungary?

Interviewee: 10 years.

Interviewer: What made you leave Hungary and come to the Czech Republic?

Interviewee: I am an expat.

Interviewer: Was it work or?

Interviewee: Yes, I am an expat. So it was my work.

Interviewer: Work, okay. When you came to the Czech Republic from Hungary, did you have any idea about Prague, about the culture here? Or were you spontaneous and made the move?

Interviewee: The decision was made in one week. I was on vacation in Morocco, and my boss told me that I had to go to Prague. I didn't know much. I came here as a tourist in the past, but I didn't know much until I came here and lived here.

Interviewer: So you didn't decide to leave Hungary in the span of a week?

Interviewee: No, I didn't. They decided for me.

Interviewer: Oh, so the decision was made for you. did you have any expectations or any idea how your life would be after you left Hungary for Prague?

Interviewee: I didn't have many expectations.

Interviewer: And you said that you were living here for a year now?

Interviewee: It's been a year from when the decision was made about my relocation until now.

Interviewer: How did you get adapted to life here, Tell me about the first month or the first week of your life in the Czech Republic.

Interviewee: It was a little bit difficult because it was not easy to move here. It is not easy for anyone to move. I had to deal with many things, and it was not easy. And the first months were very difficult. The culture is a little bit different. People here are a little bit cold.

Interviewer: Compared to Morocco?

Interviewee: Compared to Morocco, and compared to any other place. They're reserved. I don't mingle with them a lot, because I was busy with work so I focused on that, I had to stay back and do extra hours, it was hectic, so I didn't mingle with the locals much, but I found it difficult when I went shopping. When you go to a place and you want to shop, they don't help you much. I don't know, maybe because we are different, or maybe they're like this with each other as well. I think the problem was in the language. Because if they don't understand you, they don't waste their time. So I decided to find a solution without having to depend on another person. I don't need any help. I can use the phone, or go to a large supermarket, and I can buy everything by myself. So that's it.

Interviewer: Tell me about the housing, and how you managed to get accommodation here. You always have to go from place to place and deal with different matters. How did you manage the administrative part and how did you deal with people?

Interviewee: It's hard. When I first came here, Corona was starting to become a thing of the past. It was hard to find accommodation. Students were coming back because schools were opening up again so the market was saturated. I had help because I am an expat. Do you know what an expat is? When you are an expat, they make it easier for you. You have an agent that helps you. Even then, it was hard to find

accommodation, I have cats, so it's even more difficult because a lot of landlords don't allow pets. I spent one month in a hotel and then afterward I found an apartment.

Interviewer: Did you live with your family or alone?

Interviewee: Alone.

Interviewee: And my cats.

Interviewer: Apart from the administration difficulties, you mentioned that people here are cold.

Interviewee: Oh, about administration, I had a difficult problem. I don't have a garage in my house. I had to park my car. The parking lots here are all paid. Here, in the city, everywhere. So, I had to go to an administration. It was difficult. I didn't understand them. They didn't speak English. I went to this expat's event. And I found a Czech woman that helps expats, you pay here by the hour and she accompanies you anywhere you want, the hospital, the administration, and everything else. I went with her, and she helped with the papers, so I would have my parking spot.

Interviewer: So, from what you just told me, paying this person to accompany you to the administration. And you facing difficulties in shopping. What was the strategy you used to help with your adaptation? Before you came here, did you think about any? Or did you come with a blank page? Maybe you didn't think about it this way?

Interviewee: I like this expression, a blank page. My advantage is that I travel a lot because of work.

Interviewer: What do you do?

Interviewee: I am an outsourcing manager. I have been to 50 or 60 countries in the past 10 years. I am street-smart, but I did find it difficult here. I didn't come here for a short mission. I came here to help them. I will be here for 3 years at least. So I had to move. I had to halt a lot of papers in one place and then change them to another place. It was difficult. But I have a simple strategy. The first thing is that you have to find a place to live. That's the most important thing. I got help from an agent and I registered on the real estate website. I paid the fee to make it easier for me. Interviewer: On bezrealitky?

Interviewee: Yes, exactly. I registered for 3 months and started looking. The problem is that they didn't help me. On their website, you can find that landlords request either Czech or Slovak tenants. I don't know if I should call it discrimination or what? So this is the first obstacle you are faced with, rarely when you find someone... Everything is about money. You have to pay more to remove the obstacles. They just want you to pay more.

Interviewer: So these are your strategies? You find a place to live. You find an agent to help you.

Interviewee: My third strategy is socializing. It is very important. I used Internations for example, a language exchange. You have to find people who are in the same situation as you. That's where I met a Moroccan and many other people. I have a preference for board gaming. So no matter the country, I look for a group that plays board games. So I can meet people like me. So this is an important strategy.

Interviewer: Common interests?

Interviewee: Common interests!

Interviewer: I was going to ask you about discrimination. Did you face racism?

Interviewee: Of course.

Interviewer: Did you face discrimination? Because you're different?

Interviewee: Of course. It's normal, it is after all human nature. For example, in Morocco, our skin tone is a bit different. We have white, black, and mixed ethnicities. So we have a different vision. I look different from the average person here, so it's easy for them to tell I am a foreigner. When it comes to treatment, I can feel a reservation and distance. You always need an icebreaker. My strategy was to avoid...

Interviewer: What is your icebreaker? What do you do in social interactions? When you face coldness?

Interviewee: I try to learn some easy words. Like *ahoy*, *Prosim*, things like that, I learned this on the plane. These are icebreakers, when you start with this, even if you don't know what to say afterward they open up to you. Just so you can get your errands done. There's a barrier in communication. You have to find a way to get there, by crossing the language barrier bridge.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about some of your negative experiences while trying to get your errands done, maybe at work or in an administration?

Interviewee: I won't face any difficulties at work because I am in a leading position.

Interviewer: Not at work then, in a government institution.

Interviewee: When I got to administration I take the Czech lady with me. I pay her by the hour and she accompanies me. So I don't need to speak. The Human resources lady at work also helps me sometimes, she's Czech, and she helped with tax declaration. It was difficult because the form was entirely in Czech, so she helped with that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Oh, I wanted to tell you something. This one time I wanted eggs. I went to Kaufland and I didn't find it. I was looking around, it was there I just didn't see it. This lady beside me could tell I was struggling, she did not try to help, she didn't try at all.

Interviewer: Okay. I want to go back to your social circle. Who do you surround yourself with at the movement? Do you put energy into going out and meeting people? Do you have Czech friends? Do you have international friends? Do you want to get closer to fellow Moroccans? What is the easiest thing for you?

Interviewee: I don't have a problem with nationality. I don't care about where they come from. I always tell people that there is a difference between personality and attitude. Personality is who I am and attitude is who you are. You go to an event and you see how people are. You meet others, you accept them and they accept you, if are making efforts to be accepted that's a problem, you have to be yourself and see who you get along with. People in my environment are mixed. The common point between us is English. Everyone speaks English. Everything has lived abroad, even Czechs that lived in Australia, the USA, and Germany. There is a difference between Czechs who lived abroad and People who have never been outside the country. People who have been outside the country know about diversity and it reflects on how they deal with people.

Interviewer: What is the nature of your relationships with Czechs? and what kind of friendships do you maintain with Moroccan friends?

Interviewee: I only know one Moroccan.

Interviewer: only one?

Interviewee: Because he plays board games.

Interviewer: When you came here you didn't feel the need to..

Interviewee: Oh, I forgot to mention one thing about strategy..

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Interviewee: One of the first things I looked for was a supermarket that sells Arab groceries. My Moroccan friend took me to a shop.

Interviewer: Is it Farah Foods?

Interviewee: Something like that, it's in I.P Pavlova?

Interviewer: No. I didn't know about this one.

Interviewee: He sells *tajines*, so yeah this is one of the things I looked for.

Interviewer: So you didn't try to meet Moroccans?

Interviewee: Like putting extra effort into it?

Interviewer: More so having the need to meet fellow Moroccans?

Interviewee: Not really, no. They also look for people who speak English. I met Egyptians who lived here for a long time. They're engineers as well. One Moroccan, and Egyptian. I don't have a problem with people's nationality. Everything is welcome. What is important is the contact. I also care about them having a certain status, I can't welcome whomever into my circle.

Interviewer: Let's go back to the language because that's important. What are the languages you speak?

Interviewee: Yes. Darija, English, French, Italian. My Italian cousins don't speak either English or Darija. So I had to learn, and we meet every summer And Hungarian of course.

Interviewer: How did you deal with the language barrier here?

Interviewee: It's difficult.

Interviewer: Because not everyone speaks English.

Interviewee: And I don't have the desire to learn it. I see people who want to learn it. I don't want to get involved.

Interviewer: So you didn't make an effort to learn it.

Interviewee: I learned numbers from 1 to 10 in Czech. It's important. Welcome, how are you, excuse me. That was it. Native manners.

Interviewer: What about learning Czech in the future?

Interviewee: No, there will be no effort in the future.

Interviewer: Not at all?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Do you think It would make a difference in your adaption process if you learned a bit more Czech? So you're getting by with English at the moment, maybe Czech would help you adapt faster? Maybe it would cut your time adapting in half, instead of 5 months it'll be 2 months. No matter the level, it could be basic or advanced.

Interviewee: The advantage in Europe, when you go to any county you find a small international community within the county, I live in that bubble. The problem is the lack of interest. I want to stay in my bubble where I can communicate using English and mingle with international people.

Interviewer: So you have a bubble of international people who speak in English. You are comfortable in this bubble.

Interviewee: it's my comfort zone, I have no issue living like this even for 20 years.

Interviewer: You don't have a problem?

Interviewee: No, however, I had obstacles when trying to find this way of life and to get to know this system.

Interviewer: Tell me how you got into this expat bubble.

Interviewee: Through the 3 points we talked about. Events, Board games, and through colleagues. The strange thing is that this is what confused me in this country. When you go to the shared services, 80% of them are foreigners. Not 30% or 20%. I quickly understood that in Prague you can live here without needing the language. You will live just fine, you won't have a problem. Unless God forbid, you get sick. I haven't been sick yet. I think that until you are sick you will have a less pleasant experience. I haven't reached that stage yet.

Interviewer: But you said that you can live here for 20 years without needing the language. Unless you are sick. But only if you speak English.

Interviewee: Of course.

Interviewer: So if you are not proficient in English...

Interviewee: You will be in big trouble. I don't think ... Let's look at it from another perspective. A person who doesn't have proficiency in English probably relocated here after marriage or for hard labor. It will be difficult. If he is married, his partner will help him. Because she will be Czech of course. Interviewer:

Let's talk about your work and maybe your educational path. So you worked in Hungary and then relocated here for the same position. Can you tell me a bit about the nature of your work unless you mind talking about it of course?

Interviewee: No problem. It's an international company. We provide our services, we provide the entire supply chain. We provide services from the USA, South Africa, and Europe. We concentrate our services here in Prague. We had a problem with the production. We had a problem with the factory. That's why I came here.

Interviewer: You told me that you came here on short notice because you were needed. So you basically relocated with the same employer, and there were no issues with work. What do you think about Prague? Will you stay or leave? Do you have any long-term plans for the future? Maybe you will relocate if they need you somewhere else?

Interviewee: My work is my priority, it all depends on work.

Interviewer: So, nothing can keep you here?

Interviewee: If I get a mission in Zimbabwe I'll have to relocate haha.

Interviewer: How is your relationship with Morocco? Do you have family there?

Interviewee: I have a family in Morocco.

Interviewer: Do you go to Morocco? For visits?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you go there every year?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you take things with you like gifts or remittances?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: You left Morocco early.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Interviewee: 21 years old.

Interviewer: And you maintain a relationship with your home country.

Interviewee: Always, of course.

Interviewer: How did your identity change when you left Morocco? Is your identity 100% Moroccan? Or is it mixed with the things you adopted from Europe?

Interviewee: It is mixed. I lived there for a long time. It is mixed. But... The core is still Morocco. Thank God.

Interviewer: Do you keep regular contact with your family every day? Once a week? Once a month?

Interviewee: When I first left, We always had contact. But after a few years, communication is more sparse contact, because of work, and problems, It is normal. We speak less. It is normal.

Interviewer: Were you in frequent communication to make it easier for you? After you moved abroad, as emotional support.

Interviewee: It is very much a type of emotional support.

Interviewer: Do you still have friends in Morocco? Do you still have a network?

Interviewee: This network is a bit small now.

Interviewer: But do you still have contact?

Interviewee: Yes. When I go to Morocco, I visit at least 5 cities.

Interviewer: To see your friends?

Interviewee: Yes. I stay with them. They are my family.

Interviewer: You said that you didn't look for fellow Moroccans in Prague, You said that the structure is...

Interviewee: I don't really look for anybody. I go to events, and if I happen to meet them there it is great.

Interviewer: Tell me about the events you attend to make friends and meet people.

Interviewee: I used InterNations. There is a language exchange. And board games. We play board games every Wednesday and Sunday.

Interviewer: Do you play board games in English?

Interviewee: Of course. Everything is in English.

Interviewer: Do you meet people from all nationalities?

Interviewee: Yes. Even Czechs.

Interviewer: This is your preferred social network.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you feel comfortable in the social network?

Interviewee: Of course.

Interviewer: Do you want to expand your network? Or are you comfortable with the people you meet?

Interviewee: I am comfortable. You can meet people from all nationalities. You meet interesting people, I just don't go out of my way to look for anyone.

Interviewer: Can I ask you about religion? There is a big difference between the Czech Republic and Morocco. People come here and it is hard to find a mosque or halal food. Do you have a problem with that?

Interviewee: No, I don't have a problem with that.

Interviewer: Because you're not religious?

Interviewee: That's a personal matter.

Interviewer: Okay, I wanted to ask you, If you were to meet a Moroccan person that was also going to relocate here to Prague, what would you tell them? Maybe a piece of advice or anecdotes that would make their adaptations easier?

Interviewee: Get an account on Bezrealitky. They won't find an issue with transportation. It is fairly safe here. I don't think they will face an issue here.

Interviewer: We talked about obstacles and you mentioned that people here are cold. That's different from the usual Moroccan social climate. When you move inside Morocco you usually look to meet people and make connections...

Interviewee: Ah, I see. I understand your questions now. I think the most important thing is respect. It is crucial. I notice that sometimes Moroccans...well the advice I would give to anyone coming not just to the Czech Republic but to Europe..when Moroccans come to Eastern Europe, they have the wrong attitude. We should listen more than speak. The first three months they will experience a culture shock. You should know how to deal with people. You should be tolerant. Because the problem we have is that we want to change people according to what we think is right. It is not possible. When you come to a country where there are tens of millions of people, you can't expect tens of millions to change their relationship with you. You have to accept it. Because you are the one who came to this country. You have to be tolerant, compromise, and communicate. You might have to sacrifice a lot. When you're settled you might start enjoying yourself then.

Interviewer: Speaking of culture shocks, did you have any compared to Hungary or Morocco?

Interviewee: They drink a lot of beer, they drink beer instead of water. That's too much. Their food is a bit...I found it difficult. I of course cook at home.

Interviewer: Would you say the difference and quality of food is a challenge when adapting to Prague?

Interviewee: Absolutely and it is still an obstacle.

Interviewer: Are there any other minor hardships like this one?

Interviewee: Well, when I want to go eat out, I always have to look for international restaurants, Italian, Indian, Arabic. Because the food here is not my cup of tea. There are two dishes that I like. But I am still not convinced.

Interviewer: Which part are you from in Morocco? Do you identify as a Berber or an Arab? Or maybe you don't have a preference?

Interviewee: I never understood the word Berber. That movement only started after I left Morocco. I don't understand why, I am an Arab or a Berber. I am an African. I am an African, an Arab. The problem is that we are called Africans. The Africans call us Arabs. Arabs call us Arabs or Amazigh. We shouldn't be in this situation.

Interviewer: You are a Moroccan, we can leave it at that. Is there anything you want to add? About your life in Prague? About language and strategies of adaptation? I've asked the most important questions so if you have anything to add?

Interviewee: I'll have to think about it.

[End of Interview]

### **Abdulrazzak**

Interviewer: Can you tell me your name, your age, and how long you've lived here in Prague?

Interviewee: My name is Abdulrazzak, I am 49 years old, and I came to Prague in 2001.

Interviewer: Why did you move from Morocco to here?

Interviewee: I came here to study for a Master's degree. I met a Czech lady and we got married and I settled here and I had children.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your move? Did you have an idea about the Czech Republic before moving here? Or was it all spontaneous?

Interviewee: So, I met my wife in Morocco, and then I came here to study. We got married here. I had no idea what it would be like here at the time. It's an unusual destination for Moroccans, we are more familiar with other European countries like France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. So, back then I had no idea what Prague would be like.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the context in which you met your current spouse?

Interviewee: Back in Morocco, I used to work as a tour guide. So we met in a tourist circuit while she was on a visit. She returned here and then returned again to Morocco so we would plan on how I can join here in the Czech Republic. Afterward, I applied to the master's I mentioned earlier at the University of New York in Prague.

Interviewer: Was it her idea that you apply for school here?

Interviewee: I always had the idea to continue my education. I shared the idea with her and she helped me with choosing which school would be the best fit. When I came here and we got married, before even applying to the school I worked as a teacher for 3 years. That's when I decided it would be worth it to apply for a degree.

Interviewer: When you moved from Morocco to Prague, did you have any culture shocks?



Interviewee: When I came here the first time, I came here as a tourist, at the time it wasn't even called a visa Schengen. This was back in 2001 and I think the Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004. Applying for a visa was easy, after I came here, my wife and I have already decided that we were going to get married. Do you want me to tell you about the story of our marriage?

Interviewer: I think it's the most important motive for your relocation here so please do.

Interviewee: Oh, for sure it is. When she was in Morocco I was 27 years old and I explained that I am a Muslim, and unlike her culture, we don't date so the notion of a girlfriend is not familiar to us. I explained that I wasn't going to date her for 5 years and waste her time without a long-term plan, so we got that out of the way because dating for me was a waste of time. It was a shock for her because she was young. So she came to Morocco and we got married then once we came here we also got married immediately. I didn't have to go out of the country and then back, After my tourist visa was done I got a doctor's note from her mom who is a doctor saying that I was unfit to leave the country, meanwhile, my long-term papers for the residency were being processed. During this time I was also thinking about what I was going to do, I was going to start looking for a job. I had a BA in English studies and experience teaching in private schools for 2 years. When I came to the Czech Republic, I remember it was February, a very cold month, I was trying to find a job, so I looked everywhere, I wasn't speaking any Czech. I asked at Cafe Louvre, they said they didn't need anything. I asked at a Vietnamese restaurant, and they told me they would pay me 10000 crowns but they wouldn't register me, then I came across the announcement for that job at the school, it was next to the four seasons hotel in *New Town*. I didn't speak fluent Czech at the time, but I did take some intensive classes very early on at the Charles University branch in Albertov, and I paid for that out of pocket. Three weeks of intensive Czech taught me a bit. People didn't speak English at the school so my wife accompanied me...

Interviewer: How did you communicate with her? Did she speak English?

Interviewee: Yes, she spoke English. Her mother, father, and brother all speak English. So there was never an issue when it comes to communication. I remember at the time of my relocation another Moroccan came here at the exact same time and he ended up going back to Morocco because his Czech partner and her family only spoke Czech. It was a problem and he didn't stay here for long. Speaking a common language helps with surmounting obstacles. So, I was saying, with the help of my wife we read the announcement and went to the school, she also accompanied me to the school. I had the advantage of having some experience and also some recommendation letters I brought with me from Morocco from my previous jobs.

Interviewer: Did you have to translate all of it?

Interviewee: I translated my diploma. At the time I think they needed someone so when I presented myself as a candidate, the headmaster thought it was an advantage that an English teacher spoke no Czech, by the way, he was a very nice person. When I started work the staff would come to observe the class and then give me feedback. The educational system was very different from what I was used to but they were happy with the way I was teaching. I had the right to choose the curriculum, unlike Morocco. I worked there for three years, do you want me to tell you more about the experience at the school?

Interviewer: This is good, I was going to ask you about work and if you had any difficulties finding work when you arrived here. I also have some questions for you about your wife and your marriage so let's keep going. I think your spouse played a big part in your adaptation process.

Interviewee: Do you want to talk about that instead, we can stop here and...

Interviewer: Can we please continue with your work experience at the school

Interviewee: I stayed there for almost 4 years. The headmaster and secretary were very nice people. That's where I started learning and understanding Czech culture, we had a common space that I shared with my colleagues, so multiple offices grouped in one place. I worked I think 25 hours a week, class started at 7 and ended at 3. Fridays I wanted to leave early for the prayer, I informed them that I would like to leave early and move the hours I missed to another time slot, and they had no issue with that. I also started learning Czech there, when I started the job I thought we would speak all the time because I was surrounded by English teachers but it was the opposite. I started to understand Czech society as well, people saying hi to you one day and ignoring you the next morning, not out of disrespect it's just in their nature. I remember this lady at the reception would never say good morning back to me. Maybe you've noticed it yourself.

Interviewer: Many other participants mentioned the same thing.

Interviewee: She started saying good morning to me after I shared some sweets with her, and she became very friendly. With my colleagues as well, I noticed a lot of individuality, for example, if a person makes themselves something to drink they don't share, it's very different from Moroccan nature we share everything, You can't eat alone while someone is next to you. I used to make tea during breaks and I made it for everyone until it started rubbing off on them. So they would also make tea for everyone. After that, I enrolled in the masters to continue with my studies.

Interviewer: So after working at the school, you enrolled in university for a master's, did you go back to work after that?

Interviewee: I spent a long time at the school and then I enrolled part-time in the master's. This is also when I bought a fast food joint from a fellow Moroccan, the restaurant was situated close to Wenceslas Square. I didn't know much about the fast food business, however, the entire team that worked there was Moroccan, I knew some of them from the mosque. After that, I bought another restaurant and then I sold both. At this time I was thinking I might go back and settle in Morocco, I got married in 2001, and we had our first son in 2003 and our daughter in 2005. We were both thinking about it, I was longing to go back to Morocco, and I went there and tried to start a business, I would go there stay around and then come back, I eventually figured out that if I wanted to live with the same amount of comfort I had here it would be costly. Especially when it comes to the education of your children, my son did go to a French establishment, my daughter does to a Czech school and the quality of education is great, even in public school. They have a good system, for example, Grammar school, they have special courses that prepare you for university, you can start specializing very early on.

Interviewer: I wanted to talk a bit about language and your experience with learning Czech.

Interviewee: Can I finish the story about work so we don't have to go back to that?

Interviewer: Okay, let's do that.

Interviewee: So like I was saying, I would go to Morocco, I quickly let go of the idea of settling there. Then I told you I bought a restaurant, I also partially owned a mechanic shop. Then I decided that if I was going to venture into a business I needed to be knowledgeable, I wanted to explore the world of hospitality and accommodations like bookings and Airbnb. I got a job at a hotel in the old town square, I stayed there for two years, and now I own apartments that I rent on multiple platforms.

Interviewer: So you gave up on the restaurant business and started working in tourism again?

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: You said you took some extensive Czech classes upon your arrival here, but mingling with other native speakers while working at the school helped your language learning the most.

Interviewee: It helped me. I would also read to my children in Czech, I would read the newspaper, which also helped. I had no issue speaking and committing mistakes.

Interviewer: Did your wife help with language learning?

Interviewee: No, she slowed me down, we would exclusively speak English at home. It was easier. After a while, I started conversing with her in Czech and she would go along with it. After learning the basics I started adding to my vocabulary. And also learning grammar. I don't get to practice with my children because I speak Darija to them, theirs is not perfect but they can speak it.

Interviewer: Did your experience here change after you were able to speak the language? Understanding what is happening around you makes a world of difference. Would you say that helped with your adaptation process?

Interviewee: For sure, language as a means of communication makes everything easier. Whether it is at the supermarket, or at an administration... this is the main reason to learn the language, it makes your daily life easier. Well, when it comes to adaptation, how would you define that?

Interviewer: Can you try to tell me what adaptation means for you? How did you experience it?

Interviewee: Well, when it comes to adapting, assimilation will never happen, it is impossible because you are labeled as the other. First of all, this is not America or England, those places have diversity, and assimilation is possible to a certain extent. The Czech Republic is a small place in Europe, they have a long complicated history with outsiders, the Germans... actually Prague was always under the control of different powers, the Romans, the Habsburgs, the Austro-Hungarians, when did they get their autonomy? around 1918? Then the Czech Republic and Slovakia were separated in the 90s around 1992. That's when the country became the Czech Republic. Well, the important part is, like I was saying, the Nazis, the Russians especially secluded them, so for them the outsiders represent danger, you are either a Czech or a *cizinec*. I am sorry I said too much, is this getting long?

Interviewer: It's okay.

Interviewee: The bottom line is, this is not a society that welcomes outsiders. It is in the nature of Czechs to be individualistic, especially the older generation maybe the new one as well to a certain degree.

Coming from Morocco, it's a very different culture, even the way they speak, they don't have a filter. We used to visit our neighbors with my wife, it was complicated, they would speak about it all, and nothing was taboo. I learned to have my own friends separate from my wife's friends. It's difficult, they were too open, and they'd use terms I wouldn't use in the presence of my children. I do have some Czech friends, they only call when they need something, you can, of course, go for coffee together from time to time.

However, Czechs would never call just to call like Moroccans. I am not saying they should be like that I am just describing. They don't call you for the sake of calling to check on how you're doing, it's very rare. These things dictate and affect relationships, if I invite someone over I might go to extreme lengths for them hospitality-wise, if they invite me they might ask if I want water. They're also envious, when I get a new car my neighbors wouldn't say hi to me for two months straight.

Interviewer: Oh, this is the first time I hear about this.

Interviewee: He would ignore me after I got a new car. In Morocco, we usually congratulate each other when we purchase new things here you get ignored. Not everyone is like this, of course, this is what I remember from my personal experience.

Interviewer: It's valid, it's your personal experience.

Interviewee: I am comparing it to Moroccan culture. Another example is when a friend offers to give you a ride, here it's also rare. They treat each other like this as well, they don't greet each other when they don't feel like it. When you go to the grocery store you might get greeted you might not. There are okay

people, but you might meet some that give you the impression that they hate you and themselves. I notice that sometimes, they might feel little, considering their complicated past, it reflects on how they speak to you when they know you're a foreigner and they think you might not understand the language well, in Czech there's the equivalent of the polite *vous* and the familiar *tu* just like in French. Czech use the familiar you when they are addressing Vietnamese people a lot, however, that's unheard of between two Czech since they address each other with the formal version when they don't know each other. Some of these things are revealing. Well, when you see a Czech smiling you tend to remember that.

Interviewer: Did you ever experience first-hand discrimination? You mentioned that you notice their incorrect treatment of Vietnamese people, has it ever happened to you? Since we do look physically different, our facial features are quite unique here, so it's easy to identify as a foreigner.

Interviewee: For sure, that's why I said earlier that assimilation is impossible. We differ physically as well, and that's one more reason to always categorize us as aliens. This is not a melting pot. It was quite rare actually. Knowing the language helps, this one time at the post office I was addressed quite casually by this lady she said "You, what do you want?", and she was surprised when I asked her to address me formally since we are neither friends nor acquaintances. She was quick to apologize. However, that made me think a lot, why would she use the familiar tone when they always go for the formal form between themselves? With things like this, I try not to react. I remember this one time I was waiting for a friend, and this guy came and spit right in front of me, I wasn't in a great mood that day, so I went and spit in front of him as well, and waited for his reaction, I am sure he would have denied it if I asked. I would also get some looks around 9/11. I mean even when they despise you it's not worth it for them, they're pragmatic when it comes to that. I also remember this repair man that came to fix my heating, he was recommended to me by my mother-in-law. He was probably from a small village, I asked him if he ever visited Morocco, and he was quick to say no, and then he uttered some racist things. I think Czechs being openly racist would happen in a bar, however, I don't frequent those places.

Interviewer: You mentioned you have some Czech acquaintances earlier. Do you put effort into maintaining friendships with the locals or do you prefer friends with a similar background?

Interviewee: I don't have an issue, really. It's just hard to build friendships with Czech people. Maybe if I came here without being married it would have been possible, however, I came to Prague and immediately built a family life, when you have children you're more choosy about the people you surround yourself with. I am not secluding them of course, they went to Czech schools, and all of their friends are Czech. My son Salman is surrounded by a mix since he went to a French establishment.

Interviewer: You named your children Moroccan names?

Interviewee: Yes of course. Salman and Sofia. My daughter has all Czech friends. Maybe the nature of my work didn't allow me to make that many Czech friends. I owned halal food restaurants so most of the customers were Arab the rest were locals.

Interviewer: How many do you currently have in your social circle?

Interviewee: Right now I would say, none. I had a Czech friend I would play squash with, very rarely. He was a banker so I'd meet him in the business environment. But if we're talking about the notion of a close friend... maybe I am not a very social person.

Interviewer: What are the other nationalities present in your social circle?

Interviewee: I have some Moroccans... well if I am being honest maybe it's my age if you asked me 10 years ago, I knew many Moroccans and internationals, we would go out a lot. Maybe it's getting old. I have a friend that's Moroccan, I have friends from the Moroccan embassy because I've been here for a

while. I also am close to a Palestinian doctor. However, I would say I prefer to chill in a cafe alone and read, or hang out with someone I am comfortable with.

Interviewer: Can we talk a bit more about the role your spouse played when you freshly arrived here, you mentioned she helped with the job search and she also provided a place to stay when you came here, what are the other things she contributed to making you feel at home?

Interviewee: I am trying to remember. She found and showed me the mosque. She found a halal butcher. She knew I was unwavering when it come to things that touch on religion. So she looked for these things when she came back. And of course the job search, she was involved in that. When she did these things for me, she even facilitated my meeting with fellow Moroccans whom I would otherwise not meet organically.

Interviewer: When you got here and had no friends at all. What kind of effort did you put into meeting people, apart from meeting fellow Muslims at the mosque?

Interviewee: When I came here, I noticed that even people that aren't religious come to the prayers because I think when you go abroad it's a way to reinforce your identity. You meet all kinds of people at the mosque. I also met people through the restaurant business, my staff was all Moroccans and the clients were mostly Arab. I consider them acquaintances for the most part, I prefer to cut down on my social circle.

Interviewer: So, it's a personal choice.

Interviewee: I know a lot of people, but I hang out with one most of the time. He relocated here from France, he's also Moroccan. He came here for a mission and he works with Skoda. We get along well, and there are people that I hang out with from time to time.

Interviewer: What are some other steps you took towards adapting to Czech society?

Interviewee: I live in the Czech society, and my children go to Czech schools, they are surrounded by Czech friends which is important, I taught them to be tolerant, no matter their nationality or religion, while you keep your principles, humans are to be respected no matter their religion. I have the nationality, I work here and I pay my taxes here. I don't think there's more to do with adaptation. I also work with Czech, I don't work with Moroccans exclusively anymore. Maintaining an exclusive social circle of fellow Moroccans could potentially hinder one's adaptation process, as it may limit opportunities to learn the local language and fully engage with the host culture. I didn't do that. Our neighbors are also Czech, they're on the older side and I help them when I can. My neighbor often says that I am not Muslim like the ones from the Taliban or Afghanistan.

Interviewer: I think they mean that your practices differ from the ones that they know about. The stereotypes.

Interviewee: Yes, I try to change their mind about what a Muslim is. Another Czech woman at work made the same remarque, she said that I might be an exception. So I try to change these views by displaying good behavior.

Interviewer: Many of the participants mentioned struggling with their religious identity here. It's hard bringing a different culture here.

Interviewee: Well, of course. Even with my spouse, she is not a Muslim. So it's like bringing a different culture to her. You have to work together towards finding common ground. Even my wife's family respects my religion. The most important thing is respect as long as there's respect you will make others respect you and your practices. Even when I worked at the school I has no issue with this, or at the hotel. You have to work hard and earn respect then if you need to take a break to go pray or if you ask for the day off for Eid they understand.

Interviewer: Do you still visit Morocco?

Interviewee: I used to go twice a year and now we go once a year. I take my children with me and we stay for 3 weeks to a month. That helped me with teaching them the language. It was important for me that they don't feel like outsiders when we travel to Morocco. They have no issues making friends and I have a large family so they befriend their cousins. My daughter asks me about Morocco and when we'll visit. I still have a friend there as well, we went to university together. I also call home a lot. I used to email them back in 2001, phone calls used to be expensive, now with WhatsApp it's easier.

Interviewer: Are you going to retire in Morocco, eventually?

Interviewee: I am against the idea of buying property and leaving it empty like what most of the Moroccan living abroad do. I now live here and I am comfortable. I am trying to live day by day. We hope we can relocate somewhere warmer, my wife as well. Now our children are still in school so we not planning to leave anytime soon.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any changes when it comes to your identity, you've lived here for a long so maybe some of the things evolved.

Interviewee: My point of view changed, and my perceptions changed. After living 27 years in Morocco and then relocating here I think I've evolved. I also become less judgemental. I've talked about a lot of negative aspects here but I've also learned positive things here like being orderly and organized. There's a lack of human connection here and no notion of family, also I think that the notion of a woman and a mother in Morocco is different here. Here women are judged on their appearance more than their character. To answer your question, no my identity did not change, but my views have evolved.

Interviewer: What would you say to another Moroccan that will relocate here, some of the things that might make or break their experience here?

Interviewee: I would say focus on your priorities. When you do that it doesn't matter which country you immigrate to. Priorities are important. I would also say learning the language is vital. Don't waste your time in bars or chasing women. Language is key and it opens up doors. And also don't come with the preconceived idea of being the better one, or else you will find yourself excluded. Take the good and live the bad. Don't limit yourself to your own kind.

[End of Interview]

## **Hafsa**

Interviewer: Let's just start by stating your age, your profession or occupation, and your length of stay here in Prague.

Interviewee: Okay, so I'm 27 years old, female. I have lived in Prague, well I have moved to Prague since September 2021. So basically it's one year and eight months.

Interviewer: Almost two years.

Interviewee: Okay, and the last question.

Interviewer: Occupation, what do you do?

Interviewee: Occupation, okay, so I'm a project coordinator.

Interviewer: Alright, what is a project coordinator? Do you work for a Czech company or an international company?

Interviewee: It's an international company, it's an American company here in Prague.

interviewer: Do you mind telling me the name?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's Amazon.

Interviewer: Amazon, okay. Can we talk a little bit about your move to Prague, how did it come to be?

Interviewee: So my move to Prague, so basically I was contacted by LinkedIn, by their recruiter, and asked me if I'm openly willing to move to Bratislava because first I was going to move to Bratislava. And then during the interviews, I found out that I can come to Prague.

interviewer: And you chose Prague.

Interviewee: And I chose Prague because I have been here for vacation in Bratislava and in Prague, so I liked Prague better. So that's why I chose Prague. And then I was recruited directly to come here to Prague.

Interviewer: Okay, so you came here for work, for your career.

Interviewee: Yes.

interviewer: I see. And did you have any expectations? You said you were here on vacation.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: But were you acquainted with the culture, or did you have to do some research before coming here?

Interviewee: Well, I already have some background in the culture, because I was here, so I spent here I think one week or two weeks, I don't remember, back in 2018, so I know the basics. Well, my experience here as a tourist wasn't good, to be honest.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: Because of racism.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: But I chose it because this city is beautiful, and I love this city, so I chose to come as an expat, to change my mind about what happened to me here during my vacation. And it changed.

Interviewer: I see, that's good.

Interviewee: Yeah, basically. I love this city. So, yeah, for adaptation, it was, as usual, it's rough at the beginning because you know no one. Because here, I came here, I know no one. I had some connections before, but yeah.

Interviewer: Did your company help you relocate? Did they help with finding rent, or not really, you just had to do that all by yourself?

Interviewee: So basically, for my company, they can kind of accommodate you with visa and everything, but for rent, you need to look up for it on your own.

Interviewer: I see. Well, basically, finding rent here wasn't that easy, so I found rent after one month. But yeah, I found some good apartments here. But it was kind of rough to find a good apartment, especially since you don't speak the language, because it's hard to find an apartment. But once you find an apartment here, you're already adapted to the environment.

Interviewer: I see. Yeah. What were some of the really hard challenges that you faced when you just got here, very early on, maybe your first week or your first month here in Prague?

Interviewee: Yeah, so basically it would be rent. This is my struggle. Once I found rent, I didn't find any problems, because I already made my connections at work, I connected with some people, so it was kind of slightly easy to adapt. So for me, it was good. This is my struggle. My only struggle was with rent. And also afterward, after living here for around six months, I started facing problems with the language barrier, because many people...

[Interviewee interrupted by a waitress]

interviewee: So what were we talking about?

Interviewer: We were talking about how you found rent and then it got easier from there, and then you said that you made some connections at work with your colleagues.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I had some other connections through social media, through groups, and everything. That helped me a lot. As a struggle, I didn't feel it. It's only the language and then rent, and that's it.

Interviewer: How did you meet people here?

interviewee: So basically, through work, mainly for work, so my co-workers, I go out with them and also from groups, so basically the meet-up groups here on Facebook for expats.

interviewer: Which ones are you on? On Facebook?

Interviewee: Yeah, there is expat women meet-up, and there is also the global expat one. They are organizing some meet-ups and some quiz nights. I go to quiz nights a lot and also to outdoor meet-ups. From work, we have some kind of connection group at work, where they organize activities and everything. When you go there, you meet people immediately and everything. How would you describe your friends circle? Is it just international? Do you have some Moroccan friends as well?

Interviewee: Yeah, for Moroccans, I only have one. I have one Moroccan, and one Tunisian at work. Those are my close circle, and then all the others are international.

Interviewer: So you are not selective about who you surround yourself with?

interviewee: No, no. If we click, we are friends. We are going out.

interviewer: Do you get support from, or do you view your friends here as a support system? Interviewee: Yes, definitely. Especially my Moroccan friend and my Tunisian friend, they are super supportive of me, because we came from the same background, so they understood the struggle and everything. They understood the culture, so it was easier. We are basically a support system for each other here. And then my international friends, they are supportive. I'm also supportive of them because they don't have friends.

Interviewer: Because you guys share the same experience?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you said you hang out with internationals from the meet-ups, from the job, and then you have two people that are really close culturally. Did you put a lot of effort into integrating at first, or was the process just natural to you?

Interviewee: For me, it was kind of natural. Everything comes to you. Because I'm open to meeting people, so it's just natural. I cannot describe myself as social, but I'm social if someone approaches me. I'm super social, so it's easier for me to make connections.

Interviewer: So you're just open to talking to anyone, as long as you guys click, like you said.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: You mentioned the language barrier. How have you dealt with that? Are you trying to learn the language? Did you try to learn the language?

Interviewee: Yes, basically, because at work we have some kind of... How can I say it? It's not training, but the company can pay for you to learn the language. Even the language that you work with, so basically French or English, or the language of the country that you're living in. So basically for me, I choose Czech, so now I can say some words.

interviewer: You have some basics. Does that help you on a day-to-day basis?

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: Does it make it easier for you to talk to the grocery store?

interviewee: Yes, especially, because it can be frustrating at the grocery store because normally they don't speak English, so it's frustrating for them to communicate with us, expats. I feel like I can make it easier for them, because I love languages, so why not learn the Czech language and make it easier?



Interviewer: How did it make you feel to come to a country where you don't speak the language? I don't know, just tell me about how it made you feel.

Interviewee: For me, at first, I was afraid that it would be a problem, especially because of the racist comment that I got here when I was on vacation. I was like, no, what if everyone is like that? But I was like, yeah, we have only one life, let's go there and find out. If I don't like it, I can come back, so there's no problem.

Interviewer: You always have a safety net at home, you can just go.

Interviewee: Yes, and especially because I know that with time they will open another site in Morocco, so if I don't like it here, they said I can go to Bratislava or Rabat in Morocco. So, yeah, that was kind of my safe place, so if I don't like it, I can go back to Morocco.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about... you told me that you faced racism on your vacation. Did you experience something similar now?

Interviewee: Well, from my experience, I can tell you about this situation. Basically, when I was here on vacation, I went to the bus station, because it was big and I was running late and I didn't know where to take the bus or where is the entrance. So I asked the taxi driver that was just sitting there, I asked her, please, can you show me just the entrance? And she was like, no, we are in Czech, we speak Czech here. If you don't like it, go back to your country, you're not welcome here. And it was very frustrating because I was late and then the police came, and it was like, because I started crying because it was so hard. The police came and said, what's wrong? And I explained the situation, they were so kind to take me even to the bus, until the bus, because it was just too much. And I made it on time and I got to my bus, I spent all my journey crying because of that. Because it was hard, because it was my first time facing kind of racism. But then I was like, it's not going to affect me, but when I came here, I don't consider it as racism when I came here, but when it's hard for them to speak English, they are kind of rude to you. Sometimes I find I have met some rude people because I can understand them because if someone cannot speak my language and start speaking to me in another language, as Moroccans we won't be mad at the other person, we will try to help, them like they are not trying to help, but I can totally understand them. I think it's a cultural thing, I think. Because for us, I think that Moroccans are more open, and they are warmer, and with hospitality and everything, even if I don't know, like someone is asking me about direction, I don't speak the language, I will pull out my Google Translate and activate the voice, and then I can help the person because I have been there. But yeah, sometimes I don't think they are more open to people.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Interviewee: Because I had some experience with Czech people, especially at work, they are not very open.

Interviewer: No, why do you think they are not open? Do you have some idea about why?

Interviewee: Well, I asked, especially people at my work, I was like, why are you not... Because normally in my work, everyone says good morning to everyone, because we have an open space, so basically expats always say good morning, hi, how are you, but when you are saying it to a Czech person, they don't even respond to you. And one time I asked, because we were just the only two, and I said good morning, and they didn't answer me, and I was like, I'm sorry, are you mad at me or something? But they said, yeah, Czech people are kind of shy to expats, they are not very open, and it's like their culture that they are not open to other people, and they are not comfortable being open with other people. But if you speak the language, it's easier for them. And mind you, those people speak perfect English at work.

interviewer: I mean, they have to speak English to work at your workplace.

Interviewee: And also I have a Czech friend here, and I asked him as well, and he said, yeah, he explained the same thing, that they are kind of shy, so they are not very open about other cultures, but once you are their friend, they will open up to you. It's hard to make them open up to you.

Interviewer: Do you try to get Czech people to open up to you?

Interviewee: I only have one person. You just only have one person?

interviewer: Did you feel the need to, you know, when people go to a new country, they feel the need to make friends with people from the country? Did you have that need?

Interviewee: Yeah, so basically I had that need before coming here. So basically this is how I met my Czech friend, because I met him online before coming here, and we're like super friends. And I think that's made it easier for us to open up to each other because I think if we met face to face, we won't be opening up to each other. But when starting online and then when I came here, I meet the person, super nice, super helpful, was giving me tips to find rents and areas to look for and websites, and what bank account to open.

interviewer: So he helped you quite a lot with the first steps, not even adapting to the country, but being comfortable here.

Interviewee: Yeah, and he even talked with one of the landlords, for me because they don't speak English, so he just called him to ask him about details about the apartment.

Interviewer: So he was quite helpful.

Interviewee: So basically that's why I think once you make them open up to you, they are very nice.

Interviewer: So are you still actively trying to make friends with other Czech people?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Interviewee: Yeah, because as I said, I'm not the person who would do the first step toward the person.

Interviewer: You're also quite reserved.

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm super social, but you need to come to me, and then I will open up to you. And I think it's the same for them, so that's why. Yeah, because I don't feel comfortable making the first step, to meet another person, just go and say hi. No, I cannot. But if you come to say hi to me, I would definitely be open to you.

Interviewer: I think you told me that work played a big part in your integration journey. Apart from that, you said you met some people there, and you also went to events that your workplace organizes. Are there any important aspects that your workplace played in your adaptation journey here?

Interviewee: Yes, because my work really played a huge part. Because through connections from work, I got connections, and help. I would ask other people who came before me, what did you do? they are expats. How did you fix this? How did you do that? So they are open to help, because experts are open to each other because they know the struggle. So basically, if you're struggling with rent, they will tell you, you need to check on this website. Which website are you using? No, don't use that. Use that. And also, especially for restaurants, because for me, it was hard for food.

Interviewer: Tell me about it. You do not eat pork?

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Are you religious? Do you need to have halal food?

interviewee: Well, here when you come here, you're less picky about halal food, because it's hard to find here. So basically, you can eat everything. As for me, I eat everything. Only I don't eat pork, because I cannot eat it. But chicken, beef, I don't eat it, because I don't like it. But for chicken, I eat it everywhere.

So I don't especially look for a halal store, because I don't have a choice here. So basically, yeah. And also here, because I'm going to sound so racist, but here, you don't know how to cook food. Oh yeah.

Interviewer: You're not the only Interviewee that complained about the food. I think it's a big culture shock to us, no? Because of the variety we have in Morocco.

Interviewee: Yeah, basically. Not only in Morocco, but everywhere in Europe. You have taste in food, but here it doesn't have taste. Even if you want to eat a pizza here, it doesn't taste the same.

Interviewer: So that's one thing that you don't like.

Interviewee: So basically, this is why I use my network to find good spots and good restaurants. And to find my places to eat, because otherwise, you cannot.

Interviewer: Is that something you bonded over with other expats, trying to find good spots?

Interviewee: Yeah, so basically, sometimes at work, our department, we would like to have lunch. We go every Friday to eat in a new spot. So basically, everyone comes together to eat at that spot. So it's kind of easy for us, too. We made kind of a bond because of the Friday lunch. Trying a restaurant somewhere.

Interviewer: It's also quite a good social activity to have with your colleagues. I wanted to ask you, maybe how you view Prague. So, what are your future plans right now? Will you try to stay here? Or are you happy with your life here? Or will you move to another country soon?

Interviewee: So basically, for this, I'm quite indecisive. Because I am not sure if I will stay here. Because I'm aiming to go to France because I have friends there. So if I go to Paris, it will be easier for me, because I have family there, friends. So I am not sure. So if I will be allocated to France at work, I will go. And if not, I will stay here in France.

Interviewer: So your move will be more career-influenced. You will go because of the job, or you will go because you will have a bigger support system in Paris?

Interviewee: Both. So basically, for career, and also for the support system. Because I have a lot of connections there. But here, I also made my circle. But also, it's easier to be surrounded by people you have known for years. But if I stay here, I don't mind. Because I already started to learn the language and make my circle.

Interviewer: Are you still learning the language now? Yes. So you are committed to learning the language?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So you told me you only have one Moroccan friend. You haven't made...

Interviewee: plus Mohsin.

Interviewer: You haven't really made efforts to meet other Moroccans, have you?

Interviewee: Yeah, I didn't.

Interviewer: You don't feel the need to?

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't feel the need to because I am more open. If I find it doesn't matter to be only with Moroccans, I don't limit myself to having only a circle of Moroccans. So I am internationally open. So basically, if I meet a Moroccan in the way, it's okay. If we click, we click. If we don't, we are not in the circle. That's why I only have one person. Because we have met the first day at work. She is working with me as well. For others, I met them recently. Just a month ago. I have discovered that there is a community of Moroccans here. Which I didn't know.

Interviewer: There is a big community of Moroccans. Yeah, I was surprised. There is a group of 35 women here.

Interviewee: Really?

Interviewer: I was introduced to the group because I met a lot of people to do interviews. Like moms, expat wives. There is quite a sizable community.

Interviewee: For me, I didn't know that there is a community. Because I have a group. But it's just like... I guess 100 people. But they are all men and they are all older. So I didn't find myself very open to meet other people. So basically, I just made it my destiny to meet people. So basically, my circle now is Moroccans. Only one from work. And the others, I met them through another Moroccan. Which reached out to me on Instagram and we clicked. And we met all of us in an event and that's it.

Interviewer: So you did meet some other Moroccans besides your Moroccan friends from work. Yeah, we met... I have already met some other people and I was surprised.

Interviewer: Are they all young professionals like yourself? Or are they different ages?

Interviewee: Yeah, they are different ages. But they are all active. So professionals. Yeah, there is a range from 20 to 35, 39. So basically, we are in the same range.

Interviewee: Did you meet them through Facebook or you said you met them through a friend?

Interviewee: Yeah, one friend reached out to me on Instagram. And when we started talking, there was an event and he said, Would you come? And I said, Yeah, of course, I can come. And then when we met, I met a lot of people. And always the most common question, How many years have you been here? And I was surprised by hearing 9 years, 10 years. Because I didn't know that much people lived here for a long time.

Interviewer: I met some people that were here for 22 years. Wow. Yeah, they have families here and everything.

Interviewee: I'm always fascinated by that.

Interviewer: Yeah, because you don't expect Moroccans to come to Prague. Mostly we go to Paris, Amsterdam. Yeah. I just wanted to ask you one more question. Did you have any culture shocks? It could be anything. Not really just the superficial culture shocks. But anything that was a little bit out of the ordinary for you as a Moroccan.

Interviewee: Yeah, I can... It's not a culture shock, but it's kind of... I'm trying to think, but there is only one thing that comes to my mind. That here, people are not very close with their families. Not like in Morocco. So basically, people can... Same family can be living in the same city. But they can meet only in family gathering. And it doesn't meet up naturally. Or go, hey sister, how are you? Let's meet. So this is my culture shock. Because if I'm living in the same city with my sister, I would always reach out to her to go out. So basically that was my kind of culture shock. It's not a culture shock, but it was surprising. Yeah.

Interviewer: It's quite different from Moroccan culture.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that's it. This is my only one. Otherwise, it's okay. I didn't find it surprising or shocking.

Interviewer: What would you say to a Moroccan like yourself that comes from the same cultural background? If they wanted to move to Prague, what kind of advice would you give them?

Interviewee: First, be open. And don't have the traditional mindset. Because you will struggle here a lot. And you won't adapt. Because here you need to be more open. And you need to have a more open spirit to meet international people. Because you will learn a lot from them. And also, you will be having a circle of internationals. And you will also know a lot of cultures. Know a lot of new things. But if you stay close, you will be only with Moroccans. And you won't learn anything new. Because basically, you will be

discussing the same thing. But internationally, you can understand the differences between cultures. What's your culture? What's your language? Where are you from? What's your background?

Interviewer: And what about Morocco? Do you go back home?

Interviewee: Yeah. Obviously, because I miss my family. So basically, last year I went three times. This year I couldn't make it. Because the flights were super expensive, to be honest.

Interviewer: Yeah, they are.

Interviewee: This year the flights were super expensive. And also I had my travel journey already planned. So I couldn't make it. But I will go in September to see my family.

Interviewer: Did you really keep close contact with your family in your first months here? Were they emotionally supportive? Because you just moved to a new country.

Interviewee: Yeah. So basically for me, it's not very close. Because they know me. I'm an independent person. And they knew that I would be managing here. They were worried because I didn't find rent really quickly. Because before coming here, I had reserved one month at the hotel. Just in case. And then the one month started to go by. And everyone was worried. What are you going to do? One month already there. And you didn't find rent. But I found it on the last day in my hotel. I found rent. So afterward, my family will manage. We know her.

Interviewer: So they were not really worried about you.

Interviewee: Because when I was 20 years old, I did a half-Europe tour on my own. So they know that I'm independent. So they weren't overprotective of me. Because they know that I can manage. I'm open.

Interviewer: What if I asked you to summarize your experience here in Prague? Or maybe just give me the gist of it. What would you say? How would you describe it so far?

Interviewee: Fun. How can I say? Very insightful. I learned a lot of things. And it was a very good experience for me. I learned a lot of things. I have grown. I have grown mentally, emotionally, and everything. Because this experience made me meet new people. Have a new experience. And it opened for me a lot of doors. So basically because I love travel. And when I'm here, I travel a lot.

Interviewer: Thank you. Did we not talk about something that is important to you? That you would like to mention? Because I don't think I have any more questions. I think we covered everything.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that's it. I think we covered everything. Okay, alright. Now we need to...

[End of Interview]

## **Mohsin**

Interviewer: So would you mind telling me your name, your occupation, how long you've been in Prague?

Interviewee: Yeah, so my name is Mohcin Jaber. I'm a full-time working professional here. I do payroll analyst and I've been here for over eight years. This is my ninth year actually.

Interviewer: Ninth year, okay. How old are you?

Interviewee: I'm 31.

Interviewer: 31, okay. And can you tell me a little bit about the background and how you came to live in Prague?

Interviewee: Yeah, well, I wanted to... I stopped my studies back home and I worked a little bit then I wanted to go back to university. So I didn't really... I didn't really plan it. I came and I started to study the language and I realized that I wanted to stay here. So after my two first years, I had to choose between either going for a job or go back to university. And I applied for a job in Ostrava and at the end I got accepted and everything, but at the end I decided to go back to university and I stayed in Prague. So yeah, I did four years of studies here in Prague and graduated and now just back to work.

Interviewer: Have you lived in any other countries besides Morocco before moving to Prague?

Interviewee: Very short time in Istanbul.

Interviewer: Istanbul, okay. How did that experience, living in Istanbul, how did it affect your migration to Prague?

Interviewee: It made my immigration here much easier. It was the first time going outside of the country, so I had the... I went up like a blank page. You know, you need to have some set of expectations and how to deal with living abroad. And those are things that you get when you move abroad for the first time. So Istanbul was just like sort of like a training session, I would say. The basic mistake that you always do when you move for the first time, you know, you don't know like things to avoid like scams or, you know, like paying three times the price, taking a taxi, things like this. But then now that I moved to Prague, I got all these things back in my head and I know what to avoid, what to plan, plan everything. I always say to anyone who's moving here is every mistake costs money when you live abroad. So it cost me a lot of money back in Istanbul, but here it was fine.

Interviewer: It was fine. Do you still maintain relationships with your family and friends back in Morocco after your initial move, after the first time you moved here?

Interviewee: With my family, definitely, 100%. With my friends, only a few. You know, after all these years, you kind of lose touch. Many of my friends of my age got married and stuff and you kind of lose touch. But some of them that I knew for over 20 years, let's say, yeah, that's like I'm still in touch with. These are the first people I meet every time I go back home.

Interviewer: Okay. Would you say that your move here affected your identity? Did you change from Mohcin back in Morocco to Mohcin in Prague?

Interviewee: Some parts, definitely. The overall experience is not really that different because my family, I have like a large family and more than half of them live abroad. And they are married to people from several countries. So I grew up in this culture, seeing several nationalities back home. And I didn't have that shock, I would call it like cultural shock or something like that. It was literally the same.

Interviewer: Okay, so you would say that your identity pretty much stayed the same.

Interviewee: Yeah, certain things, they changed. But again, like they changed with age, you know, like after all these years, there are things that you can get used to. I go back home only once in three, four years. So I noticed things in myself that looked normal to me when I was living back home, that don't really look normal to me now when I go. So certain things have changed, for sure.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about your sense of belonging? Do you feel like you belong more to Czech Republic, Prague or to Morocco?

Interviewee: That's a very difficult question. I feel like here in Prague, I have built, it would be a little exaggeration to call it a whole, like an entire life, or like a new life. Because most of the people I know are here. Most of the people I hang out with are here. And when I go back home, I start to feel a little bit stranger in a way. People I haven't seen for 10 years and you don't really recognize each other. You know, like our minds, our thinking, our ways of doing things are completely opposite to each other or something like that. But there is always part of me that stays.

Interviewer: Connected to Morocco?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely. Did your international profile as a Moroccan national coming to Prague affect the way you adapted and integrated into Prague the first time you came here? I want you to narrate it to me like a story. Talk to me about how you are Moroccan and you moved here to Prague. Do you think that the Moroccan identity affected the way you integrated into Prague society?

Interviewee: I would say the quick answer is yes. It plays a large role. Because I don't think, just to speak for myself, like I wouldn't adapt 100%. There is always parts of me that are related to things that I've grown up with. My values and things like this that you learn when you grow up. And it's also, I would say, it's healthy to draw a line. Where you know whether the things that you will take from here and the things that you don't want to take might be harmful. There is no perfect place. So you cannot just take the whole thing. But yeah, definitely. My integration was actually pretty easy, I would say. I didn't face any struggles, any issues. It came smooth. But maybe because I went back to studies and living in a dorm, living with students, makes things much easier, much smoother to adapt. Everyone is mixing with everyone. And yeah, grew up in this after all these years. You don't study anymore but you're still in touch with people from everywhere.

Interviewer: What does it mean to integrate for you? If you would define the word to me.

Interviewer: integration. It's a sort of a second home, creating a sort of a second home here. You don't feel you're... I personally don't feel that I'm a foreigner. I can deal with things myself. I mean at the same time it requires, some little bit of... how to call it? Some hard work from my end as well. I cannot just be moving here and expect myself to adapt magically without doing some things from my side. So for example I can go to the foreign police where nobody speaks English and take the challenge and deal with it myself since my very first year. And after all these years I've never had the need to bring someone to help me with anything document-wise, banks, whatever it is. I deal with it. Language helps too. I barely speak but I can manage when I need to buy something, make a phone call. All of this helped me create a second home here. My circle in Prague, a circle is the best word I would say. My circle in Prague basically is much bigger than my circle back home currently.

Interviewer: Do you still think that you have a support system or a social network back home? Because I know you talked about your circle here in Prague so you definitely have a social network that you feel are a part of here in Prague. But do you still have that back home?

Interviewee: I do have, though it's a very small one. I would say it's really very few friends that I know since childhood and we're still in touch. Mostly my family, I'm very close to my family, like my mother, both my siblings. And every time I go we usually like to travel, go somewhere and do something. I would just see them, just get in touch. We barely talk when I'm here but when I go there I see them almost every day. So I'm balancing well between both.

Interviewer: So let's talk about these two circles. Does your circle here in Prague help you or do you think the people that you made friends with here help you integrate better? And does your family and friends back home encourage you to integrate better here?

Interviewee: I'll start with the second. The same thing goes for my family as for myself. In our family we have this culture mixed so they were not surprised when I decided to move. And they are glad that I'm not isolated or something. In fact when I arrived for the first time, since I'm a bit of a shy person at the beginning, they were always asking me like, are you making some friends? Go, meet people, don't stick to one nationality or identity, just go meet everyone. And I was like, hell yeah. Here in Prague, with my friends, well I have my close friends and there are people that I know, there are people that I'm still in touch with from several jobs that I've done. Like my previous teams, we still hang out and everything from several jobs. But we definitely have a good bond with my friends. We always help each other in any type of support. It can be either emotional support. If one of us is going through something, we're always here. We even help each other financially too. We're all foreigners. A few Czechs are in our circle.

Interviewer: That was my next question.

Interviewee: But we're all foreigners, we're all going through the same thing I would say. We all face the same difficulties plus minus. So yeah, we're here to help each other. If someone comes to me struggling with rent, I would understand how it feels. So I would give a hand and another person would do it. And we all have been students. We know each other since we were all students. And we know how it is to be students and struggling money-wise, don't have time to do anything else. And we have always helped each other.

Interviewer: So your circle here is mostly internationals like yourself. Is it Moroccans or just internationals in general? Do you have other Moroccan friends here that you consider close? Interviewee: Actually, really barely. I would say including yourself, I know four people in general. I think the reason is that first of all, I don't choose which one is from where. It's barely like if you vibe with someone. If you really understand each other, you're hanging out, you're having good times. In general, it ended up most of my friends are from several countries. But at the same time, we're in Prague. There's like few Moroccan people here. And age-wise, our ages are close to each other. I came in my early 20s. Most people I met are also like in almost the same age. So this also helps. We have kind of like same vision. But only, I would say, only four Moroccan people that I know.

Interviewer: It doesn't really matter. Have you experienced any discrimination or prejudice based on your ethnicity or national background when you came to Czech Republic?

Interviewee: I personally didn't.

Interviewer: You didn't?

Interviewee: Not even once.

Interviewer: Not even once? Never?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: I want to talk a little bit about language and communication. Because I know that communication is a big part of integration in any foreign country. How has the language affected your abilities to integrate in Prague?

Interviewee: Well, I don't speak the language to a certain level. That good. I would say, not good. I manage when I would go to buy something from grocery stores to make a call. I would make a bunch of mistakes, but I would make my idea or my point clear. People would understand me after asking me a few questions to be sure what I'm saying. But I can already see the difference. My first two years were very difficult compared to now. I just started learning the language and I didn't know nothing. So that made it much really difficult. I can see the difference, though I would say there are situations where you really need to speak the language in a good level. To give you an example, I was really sick and I had to go to the hospital. I spent almost a whole day in the hospital and there was barely someone who speaks English. You know you're sick, you're in pain and you just need to deal with this. You have a bad day and you can start to see the importance of language. You want to call a bunch of hospitals, doctors, you don't know the language and you're just stuck with pain. I remember that was the day when I was like I really need to learn the language, to go much deeper into it.

Interviewer: Do you think if you spoke fluent Czech you would integrate better? You would have more Czech friends as opposed to international friends?

Interviewee: I don't think so. I don't think so because generation-wise, people in my... Well, I'm 31, I would say people in my age or younger, the locals, most of them speak English. Especially people who live in Prague or from Prague. In my first years it was the other way around. Most of my friends were Czech. Since I was new, it was like my... sort of like my... one of my objectives is to get in touch with the



locals. And most of them were speaking English. There was no need for me to learn Czech at that time, I would say.

Interviewer: Does making contact with the locals... is it an important thing for you to feel integrated in a new society or a new place?

Interviewee: At a certain level, yes. It's not that necessary, but at the same time it's the same as saying you're a foreigner and you're isolated only with foreigners. Balancing between the two is good. But if you're moving to a country and you want to feel the charm of that country, part of it is to get in touch with the locals, to get that local idea. There are things that we see from a foreigner's perspective and there are things that we need to see from a local perspective. Interviewer: Alright. Did you use any... like you mentioned that you tried to learn the language a little bit. Yeah. To overcome the language barrier. Yeah. Did you use any other strategies to better integrate, apart from wanting to learn the language?

Interviewee: Not really. I would say just learning the language and go meet people and that's it.

Interviewer: That's it? Yeah. Okay. You mentioned that you're a young professional. Yeah. You work. Was it hard to find work when you came to Czech Republic?

Interviewee: Absolutely... well, now, no. At the beginning there are some challenges but they are related to paper-wise. It's easy in general to find a job in Prague. I speak mostly about Prague. It's very easy to find a job when you speak a European language, English plus a European language. It's very easy to get. But it's mostly all about the visa you're holding and things like that. When I was a student getting a part-time job was very easy. At the same time, getting a full-time job request that you are in the labor market. That means you graduated from Czech University and you are in the labor market.

Interviewer: How was your experience with education here in Czech Republic?

Interviewee: Very good. Very, very good. I still remember my years at university. It was a lot of fun. I studied at Czech University of Life Sciences. I had to study in English, of course, because of the language. But overall it was really good. At that time I was working in the hostel, working at the bar, working at reception. There were some events like beer tasting. I used to invite my classmates, my teachers. They never looked at us like just this barrier between student and teacher and not talking to us or something. They loved the fact that we used to invite them, go out with them, have some drinks. It was fun. We had a lot of projects. I did economic studies. Really a lot of projects. Sometimes it was tiresome. Really a lot. But at the same time we worked in groups. That creates some integration again. We had to go to several places and prepare things. It was good.

Interviewer: Are you planning on staying in Czech Republic? Or do you plan to either move to another European country or move back to Morocco?

Interviewee: Moving back home will be very difficult. I got used to living here. It's not excluding this option, but I would say it will be the last option. Staying here, maybe. But it's very difficult to say yes, you know, firmly say yes. I'm still in an age where it's easy for me to move anywhere I want. But it all depends on the job offers I get. I would say that's number one. I don't want to go back to study again. I'm done with studies. So it will be work-wise. But so far I don't really have any plans. So far I don't really have a firm reason to move. Since I'm enjoying my stay here after all these years, I'm still enjoying it. Prague is one of the best places I've been in. So far things are going fine.

Interviewer: What factors would influence your move from Czech Republic to another country? You mentioned work offers. Are there any other factors?

Interviewee: Yes. I would say the second factor will be the factor that bothers me here. Which is? Which is the equation I would call it between salary and rent. There's like a housing crisis since I moved here, since 2014. No one is saying anything about it. I'm not watching what they say. The political parties, what

they talk about. But I don't think they even talk about what's going on with the rent. Always focusing on something else, which makes sense. But rent is going out of control and no one is doing anything about it. It's not fun to put almost half of your salary in rent every month. That's something that bothers me. The main thing that bothers me here.

Interviewer: Is that? Okay. Do you have any advice or anecdotes that you would give to other Moroccan migrants that are looking to relocate from Morocco to Prague? And what would you say to them if their ultimate goal was to integrate into Prague society fully?

Interviewee: Well, first thing I would just say good job for the fact that they decided to pick Prague. Since it's not one of the choices that people from Morocco choose. And so someone who decided to come here definitely shows that they did a lot of research already. Because it's easy to move to Western Europe. Almost all of us go there. But moving here takes some dedication, some work. It's not bad. Definitely it's a very good experience. I would just tell them that don't think of it as a bad decision. Don't think of it as a risk. The fact that you decided to go somewhere else besides France or Spain does not mean that it's a bad choice. It's not because everyone goes there that means that this is the right choice. Try other places and Prague is a good example of a place that our people don't know about. And it's actually good. Good for studies, good for work. Young people in general if they want to move, this is a good place. And just be open-minded and don't isolate yourself. It's not easy to be a foreigner, especially when you just move in. It's difficult to integrate at the beginning. You're far away from family and friends. Things start to change. You start to see the world in a completely different light from ours. But face it and go ahead. Everything comes with dedication.

Interviewer: Did you come here to Prague with your last goal on the list would be to get European citizenship?

Interviewee: You mean like my goal? Like coming here?

Interviewer: Yeah, coming here. Like moving to a European country. Usually third world nationals look for jobs or look to get educated. But most of them want to keep living in Europe and getting the European nationality.

Interviewee: Well, nationality-wise it's not that important for me because I've already set up my area, I would say. I've set up everything. The fact that I have an employee card, I'm working, I'm stable in any sense, it's already enough. Nationality, citizenship, European nationality. I know it's going to be much easier for me to reach out to that since I'm already here. But the most important thing is that I'm satisfied with my move, I'm satisfied with my work, with my living here. Everything is going fine, everything is going well and that's already in itself is enough. I don't have a specific goal afterwards. My goal was just to get somewhere and get my life done. Get everything fixed and get everything fine.

Interviewer: Did you experience any cultural shocks when you first landed here in Prague?

Interviewee: No, I didn't have any cultural shock. My switch was much easier, was much softer. I do believe it is because my family is mixed. Also, since I used to play in a band doing music back home, we used to have a lot of foreigners who lived in Rabat who would come to our house, play with us. I already was like having friends from several countries before moving, I believe it helps already. That's something that helps a lot. Nowadays, it's like people, foreigners are in almost every country. It's much easier to get in touch with them. They also, I believe, if I want to get in touch with the locals, wherever they are. So, this helps reducing the shock. That cultural shock, I think it's a good thing. It's a way to open your eyes that the whole world is not how it is back home. Not everyone is like us. Not everything else is not like how it is back home. So, you start to open yourself.

Interviewer: Do you think that you put any effort into trying to preserve your essence as a Moroccan while living in the country? While living in a foreign land like Prague?

Interviewee: Well, definitely.

Interviewer: Do you still try to keep a link between the Mohcin that you are now and your roots?

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely. It's the same as I said before. Not everything here is perfect. Not everything back home is bad. I had to balance between both. It's my identity anyways. Either we like it or not. And that's something I should preserve. Then here, I have to play it smart, I would say. And if there's something that I believe that is better, I'll have to take it in my both hands. My identity remains the same. And that's something that I'm not willing to change. It would make no sense for anyone to change who they are, where they come from, whatever they have experienced. How tough was it or good was it?

Interviewer: Do you ever bring or take things between the two countries? Like when you go back to Morocco, do you take things from Prague to Morocco? And when you come back to Prague, do you take things from Morocco to Prague? It could be anything like food, maybe you send money to your family. Maybe you take some things that aren't available in Prague from Morocco here when you come back.

Interviewee: Well, it's mostly, I would say, gifts. I have two nieces, so I spoil them with sweets. And I wouldn't mind some toys, but they are a little too young for that. I bring with me things like... Mostly my sister asks me for things from Sephora. So I have to bring that with me. Besides gifts, that's it. There's nothing from here that I'm bringing else. Souvenirs could be, which are like Czech souvenirs. So for them to have an idea what's going on here, what is Czech Republic, what is Prague. But I mostly bring things from me back home. Mostly I would say food-wise. It's difficult to find our stuff here. So that's something that I like to bring.

Interviewer: Anything that you would like to talk about that I didn't ask you? Some really important aspect to you. From the very beginning when you moved to now.

Interviewee: I just want to point out to... Back again to everyone who wants to move here. Actually, no matter where they come from. Really, because I've seen people struggling with moving here. Struggling with adapting with others, meeting people. They start to isolate and I know how difficult isolation could be. My first year was like that. It was difficult for me to adapt. I couldn't do anything. So it's very important, it's very healthy for the person to push themselves. It's difficult at the beginning, but it becomes a natural thing to just come in. A bunch of random people. Prague offers a lot of events. There are a lot of events left and right. Musical events, art events, books events. Language, free language courses. You go, you study something, you learn something. You meet other people, you start to get into it. It's very easy. Also to know the tricks. There are a lot of things that we know after several years. And it would take anyone who'd come here many years to know. Every time I meet someone who just moved here and they ask me for advice, I always point out here are the things. You better know them.

Interviewer: What are the tricks?

Interviewee: Like the do's and don'ts. I would say things that I point out are like there are Facebook groups, like Prague Expats. Things where you can ask questions when you have issues. Things like you're renting a place, landlord don't want to give you your deposit back. There is this association that has free lawyers and they will help you. So there is help everywhere. There is support everywhere. There are ways to make friends. Everything is easy actually. You just need to know the tricks.

Interviewer: Why would you say that your first year here was a bit harder? You said you isolated quite a bit when you came here.

Interviewee: Because I didn't decide to isolate myself. I noticed after a while that I was isolating myself. Subconsciously I was isolating myself. It was difficult for me to go to a bar where I know no one. Just to

approach some people that are drinking and be like Hey, I don't know you, nice to meet you. That's something that is difficult to do. When you overthink something it becomes even worse in your mind. But then at one point I had two choices. I would either push myself and then chill afterwards. Or just stay in my own mind, still overthinking things and stay there for I don't know how long. That's something I didn't want to experience. I went and faced my fears and go ahead. Everything worked well. I have friends like almost everywhere. Even locals and some other foreigners when they want to change their job or something they come to ask me. Hey, do you have some leads? Do you know someone who does this? People come to ask me actually for things I'm not even familiar with.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you're a full Prague person now? You feel fully integrated? Would you call this place your home?

Interviewee: Difficult to say full. Because we have to keep something from where we come from which is our identity. I would never call myself fully integrated. But I would call myself, I don't know, 90%. I mean, I know Prague better than locals who don't live in Prague. That's a little challenge I would do. My circle here, I've built a second home. I've basically built a second home. It's difficult for me to go back home, in my city back home, than staying here. When I'm back home things have changed. And when I'm driving there I don't know the streets. I still use the old roads to get from A to B. And my friends or family they keep laughing at me like, hey, this is an easier way. Sticks that I used to go to the places have closed. And new things have popped up. That's how I felt a little stranger back home. Since I go only once in three or four years.

Interviewer: Alright. I think that's a wrap.

Interviewee: Awesome.

[End of Interview]

## **Jihane**

Interviewer: Great. Yes. So, can you please tell me... Oh, by the way, we can mix English and Darija. Because I love it.....And even sometimes... Because it's like my mother tongue, so... Sometimes give you some words here and there and you can too. I interviewed most of the people in Darija because they were most comfortable with that. But I think you want to do it in English, right?

Interviewee: Let's mix it up.

Interviewer: Okay, cool, cool. So, do you mind telling me your name, age, and how long you've been living here in Prague?

Interviewee: My name is Jihane, I'm 30 years old and I've been in Prague for 2 years now.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you mind telling me about the story of your move? Like, how did you come to live here, and why you're here initially?

Interviewee: So, I moved to Prague actually as part of a relocation program with the company I'm working for. It's a long story, but if you don't know... Basically, I was working for the same company in Morocco because they had a branch there. But after COVID came, there was like a global decision to shut down several branches all over the world. And Morocco was impacted, so the branch was closed. And because I was marked as a talent or whatever that thing is, I got the proposition to relocate to Prague. There was another one, but yeah, it was Prague and somewhere else.

Interviewer: Do you mind telling me the other choice?

Interviewee: It was Dubai.

Interviewer: Dubai. And you chose Prague.

interviewee: I chose Prague, yeah. Dubai, like, yeah, it's complicated. Not too complicated, but I prefer to come to Prague over Dubai.

Interviewer: Why? Considering that Dubai is much closer in culture to Morocco.

Interviewee: You think so? I don't see it that way.

Interviewer: I think...Actually, what I think does not matter, but I... Yeah, maybe you don't think so. You don't think so. That's why you chose...

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't think so. Because, first of all, Dubai, like, I don't know, but I didn't feel comfortable moving to Dubai, because people there have a certain perception of Moroccans, like Moroccan females. And on top of that, even if one day I would want to move somewhere else, chase another job opportunity or something, usually the job offers you get depend on your passport, basically. And also, like, yeah, you may get an advantage not paying taxes and so on, like, saving up a certain amount, but you don't really get a lifetime advantage, because you cannot get a... You cannot become Emirati, you know? Dubai, you go there to work, and as soon as you don't have a job left, then you just go home. It's not somewhere you can call my home, you know, home, one day. So, yeah, for me the decision was very clear. And also, like, Prague being in the center of Europe, I was like, yeah, I'm gonna have the opportunity to wander around and visit so many places.

Interviewer: Did you have any idea about Czech culture before coming, or did you just wing it? No. And you decided to just, okay, I'll take the opportunity and I'll go?

Interviewee: Yeah, for me, like, the opportunity showed up and I was like, okay, I'm gonna take it. If I don't like it, I can come back, like, go back home anyway. So, yeah, I didn't know much, but I started researching what to expect and, yeah, over YouTube, after I applied for the work permit.

Interviewer: So, you started doing the research when you got here or when you were back in Morocco?

Interviewee: No, before I moved here, I started, like, you know, just learning a few, the Ahoy and the Djekuyu and stuff. And I also, like, started, there was, like, this YouTuber who's, I think, John? John or Jane?

Interviewer: Oh, Honest Guide.

Interviewee: Just American.

interviewer: Honest Guide, no?

Interviewee: No. So, yeah, I saw a couple of videos from Honest Guide as well. And another guy, like, who was advising, because I didn't know in which, like, district I would settle. So, I was, like, trying to understand where's, like, yeah, where, in which Prague, actually, Prague five or two or one would be nicest to live in. And then there was this other YouTuber, I can't remember her name. She's an American expat here. And she was, like, she posts videos about, like, how she as an American perceives Czech culture.

Interviewer: Oh, Prague Morning?

Interviewee: Not Morning?

Interviewer: She's blonde, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, she's blonde, yeah. I think so. Yeah, so that's, like, the, yeah, that was the only homework I did.

Interviewer: Did you have any culture shocks when you got here?

Interviewee: Culture shocks? None that I can, like, think about. Maybe the dogs, like, the fact that everyone has, yeah, like, the place that pets have here. Because I have a dog as well. Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Back in Morocco, so it was, like, oh, Lina would be, like, would, Prague would be a heaven for Lina if I, whenever I would bring her over.

Interviewer: Can you please recall your...

Interviewee: That's positive, not really a shock.

Interviewer: I mean, yeah, it still counts. Do you mind, like, telling me, maybe, like, going back in time and telling me about your first, maybe, like, day here or week or even month, if you can muster that?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I arrived here, like, in the, just after the COVID restrictions started to, you know, get looser. And I spent the first month in a hotel in Prague two, you know, in Vinohrady. And the first month was, like, what, two weeks of quarantine and one week to finalize the biometrics and stuff. It was, like, quite administrative. Yeah. Nothing much happened.

Interviewer: Did you have any, like, did you think about your strategy for when you get here? What you will do to, like, get by and integrate better and make friends? Or did you just come here and things just happened to you?

Interviewee: Well, I do remember that I was involved in these Czech language classes provided by the integration fact center. So that was, like, the first thing. I was, like, I need to learn the basics of the language just to maybe facilitate my integration here. Other than that, nothing much. Like, I was going to the office from time to time, but it was not, it was good, but it was not really helpful. Because the nature of my job didn't really allow that, since I do not collaborate with any of the people who work here who are based in Prague. Because I manage the Middle East market and Asian markets. So it was like going to the office, not speaking to anyone, basically. Aside from HR and IT, with whom I was sharing some jokes. But, yeah, it was not really, you know since my team is not here, it wasn't really helpful, I'd say. But, yeah. Other than that, I was, for the, during the first months I was mostly connected with my, connected with my family. Especially that my husband was still there and he is still there, actually. So I was, like, mostly connecting with my family, rather than looking for relationships or acquaintances here.

Interviewer: Did that change? Are you now looking to make more friends?

Interviewee: Yeah, I did. Starting from, actually, June last year, maybe before that, yeah, specifically June, my dad was sick. And I was going to Morocco, like, very often to see him. And when I came back, I went through a bad period, because I was very anxious. As I felt the need to go back to Morocco, I was like, what am I doing here? I'm just working. I can work from anywhere. Because I stayed in Morocco very long. I went back for two months and then I went back again for one month and a half. So it's like I could very easily stay in Morocco, do the job there, and just stay close to my family. Especially with my dad being very sick. And I had, actually, trouble going through that because it was contradicting. There was this contradiction between what I was doing being here and what I felt I needed to do. And I needed to be. And yeah, it was rough. And I started working with a therapist because the anxiety got worse and worse. And with the therapist, actually, going through that, identifying the sources of anxiety and everything, it came out. We figured out that I had social anxiety as well. For her, not making any effort to connect with people here was a sign of that. And she started giving me coping mechanisms, how to slowly immerse myself in the environment here, and so on. Not with specific guidance linked to Prague, but just don't feel forced to be liked or to like people. Just connect. This definition of connection is something that I did not have. And I was like, OK. This is when I started to look over Facebook events and stuff and just go there. It would be uncomfortable in the beginning. And I'm like, OK, I'm not here to do anything. I'm not here to make friends or for anyone to like me or me to feel that I like this one or I agree with this one. Just be there, and connect. And it was really helpful. So, basically, starting from June, I started connecting with people, essentially through GTI events. And basically, I would attend one event and connect more with one person than others, where I would feel that we have things in common. And that would result in more meetings or plans. Because I would be like, oh, I was thinking about that. Oh, me too. That's interesting.

And, yeah, and it grew from there. And now I have a couple of friends. I can call them friends, but not really in the friendship. But people you can connect to and just spend time with. Talking about everything and planning stuff together instead of going alone. Because for one year and a half, I was just doing solo trips, for example. I enjoyed it. It was not terrible. But the thing is that when you connect with people, it also allows me to appreciate my me time, and my loneliness even more. So, good balance.

Interviewer: What kind of people do you surround yourself with? Are they Czechs or international girls? Or have you made any efforts to meet with Moroccans like yourself? Or not really? Or does that not matter to you?

Interviewee: Czechs, not essentially. But not that I'm choosing or picking. I'm not really picking. There would be an event and I'm like, yeah, I would be involved in that. Yes, involved in that. And I would not pick that I want to speak with Moroccans or with the Turks. But open

Interviewer: what happens to be around you right now? Would you mind telling me the nationalities?

Interviewee: So, Natalia is from Ukraine. I know another person from France. Two people from France, actually. And Christy is Chinese. She organizes board games and I attend almost every Monday. Not every Monday, but yeah, most Mondays I would go. Who else? Katarina from Portugal. These are... Amber from South Africa. It's very diversified.

Interviewer: It's very nice.

Interviewee: These are the people I connected the most with. But there are other people with whom we could just chat.

interviewee: And you met all of them through Facebook?

Interviewer: Yes, absolutely all of them from the GGI events specifically.

Interviewer: Have you used any other social media to meet friends or is this just your only way?

Interviewee: No, not really. I think I was browsing the meet-up events, but I didn't go. I think there was a board game activity I didn't go to. So far it was only Facebook.

Interviewer: Was it important for you to get acclimated to the culture when you came here? Or was that a thing to decide after the job?

Interviewee: Good one. I don't think I felt the pressure. But I think that's mainly driven by the fact that I'm not really surrounded by Czechs. I don't work with Czechs. I don't know, I didn't feel the pressure that I have to accommodate to the culture. And I'm not sure I grasp the Czech culture really. What is Czech culture?

Interviewer: That was my next question. How would you define Prague culture or Czech culture? Because some people feel that Prague culture is not really Czech, but it's still a Czech town. So maybe you can give me your own definition of how you view the culture around you.

Interviewee: I have no idea. Because I guess I'm mostly connected with expats. But for me, Czech culture is mostly linked to the cuisine. For example, the fact that they don't have much variety of veggies. For me, Czech culture is eating meat and potatoes. It's stupid, but this is all I can capture. The law of pets, that's really something nice. Maybe that's because I didn't live elsewhere before. This is my first... Czechs.

People say they're grumpy, but I don't know.

Interviewer: So you have no Czech friends?

Interviewee: I have no Czech friends, yeah.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about the challenges that you faced when you came to Prague. Can you remember any things that annoyed you or you found particularly challenging to get over?

Interviewee: Yeah, something happened. After I relocated, I had to open a bank account. I went to a bank. You can remove the brand if you want. I went to this bank to open a bank account. I gave them all the

documents they requested. I was just denied to open a bank account. I was like, what? Anyways, the guys did not say anything. But one of them said that in Morocco it's not really... I don't know, they were concerned that I would be transferring money to a terrorist organization. So that was something...

Interviewer: Would you call that discrimination? Or prejudice based on where you come from?

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Any other challenges that come to mind?

Interviewee: Well, I guess going to the hospital. It was rough.

Interviewer: Do you mind telling me about the experience?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was rough. It was a Friday. My ears were aching. I was like, maybe I'm getting otitis or something. I called my GP and she was not available. She said I can see you today. So I had to go to the hospital. I was thinking that if I wait until the weekend, it would just get worse. I'm not sure if there would be... The emergencies and stuff. It would be complicated. So I just took the tram and went. The fact that I was not speaking Czech was really... A challenge. I was trying to explain to the lady where it was aching. She was like, I don't understand.

Interviewer: So it was to the doctor? No, no, no. You know these clerks or whatever?

Interviewer: The receptionists?

Interviewee: Yeah, the receptionists. It was not really helpful. I took the phone and I was trying to translate from English to Czech. And because I took the classes, I can read. I know how every letter is pronounced. So I could read from the translation. And only then she changed her facial expressions to at least, OK, you're making an effort, right? She was appreciative of the effort that I was making. Yeah, it was really difficult. I had tears in my eyes. I was like, oh my God. This is so rough. What if it was not only an ear pain? What if it was something really serious? Yeah, so that was one.

Interviewer: Any other things that come to mind?

Interviewee: No. Thankfully.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social network right now? social network or support system that you have in Prague?

Interviewee: I don't know. I don't know how to rate it. But I guess that I can say that I do have a support system. Because recently, just back in Feb, I caught COVID actually. And I had a really bad episode of COVID. It was the first time for me to get it. And I was bedridden for three days with a high fever. And I had some plans that I had to cancel. And I had to inform the girls whom I met before. Hey, be careful, I got COVID. And we just met recently. So you might want to isolate or something. And just the fact that people were sending me messages. Like, do you need food? Do you want me to drop some medicine at your place? So it felt really good to know that when something happens, there are people who care. So yeah, that felt good.

Interviewer: You said you don't know any other Moroccans, right?

Interviewee: I do, I do.

Interviewer: So how would you describe your relationships with other Moroccans here in Prague?

Interviewee: So actually, it was quite a funny coincidence. Because some other girl found my name. I replied actually on this post on women expats in Prague. And I just replied in a comment. And another Moroccan girl saw my name. Same as what happened with you. And she sent me a message over Facebook and we connected. And then she was like, are you in the WhatsApp group for Moroccan women? And I was like, I didn't know. I thought I was the only Moroccan here. And she's like, no, there is a group, I'll add you. She's like, I'll add you. We gather from time to time and so on. So her name is Hind. So Hind introduced me to a couple of Moroccan ladies. Mostly moms. I didn't find students or people



who are... But it was good. We met on a few occasions. Where one of the ladies would prepare couscous and invite us over. Interviewer: Do you still meet up with them? Are you still in contact with them?

interviewee: Yes, I am. But recently, I think nothing was organized. I mean, yeah, they went. We're still reaching out. I'm still sending Ramadan Kareem and stuff.

Interviewer: Have they affected your integration here at all? Positively? Maybe not really?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it's...

Interviewer: To a certain degree, maybe?

Interviewee: If you just want to hang around and speak Darija because you miss it. I guess. I mean, discovering and trying new stuff is always interesting. It feels good as well to have this... reference point? It's like a reference point of something that is known and that you can miss. Because I do miss Morocco from time to time.

Interviewer: Do you want to talk a little bit about the language barrier? How have you been navigating the language barrier? Are you trying to learn Czech? Do you want to learn Czech if you plan to stay here for long? Talk to me a little bit about it.

Interviewee: Learning Czech, if it were easy... If it was Spanish or something, I would have done it for sure already. But it's so complicated. I stopped at A1 just with this course that I said was provided by ICP. But now learning it is a real decision to take. Because it's tough, it will be time-consuming. It's not really usable elsewhere outside of the Czech Republic. So I need to decide first if I am staying longer if I am planning to stay here for life or 10 years or 5 years or whatever. Then yes, I think if I do take that decision, I would definitely put more effort into learning the language. At least the B1 that is required for the PR and also to be sure that if you need to go to the hospital or to rush to the police station or whatever, you would be heard, understood, and for you as well to understand. But other than that, I am not really interested. It's so much trouble.

Interviewer: It is a hard language. Do you think your life would be easier if you knew some Czech? Or if you had a conversational level? Or do you think it will not change anything because you are an expat?

Interviewee: On public services, it would be helpful. I think so. Now, for example, I am so grateful that I am at this stage, I mean I need to renew my work permit, and my residence card. I am just so grateful that I don't have to do with on my own because there is an agency that is doing it on my behalf. Because otherwise, I would be like, I don't know how to say a word to the check post or the Ministry of Immigration. It would be complicated. Like for example, coming back to the bank issue, when Raiffaisen did not accept to process my request, the HR from the company advised me to go to Airbank because apparently another expat enrolled with them. And I went to Airbank but they only speak Czech. And they do speak English with you, like when you go to their customer service or whatever, representatives, they do speak English, but they require for you to be accompanied by a Czech speaker because it's a formality before you sign the contract. So I had to bring someone over, like a translator just to do that.

Interviewer: Oh, you had to pay a translator to go with you.

interviewee: Yeah, luckily I didn't have to pay them because the guy who was helping me with the immigration file and everything from the agency, I didn't know anyone else so I called him and was like, yeah, this thing came over, can you please help? And he was like, yeah, sure. So he did that for free. But when you see that it can be required by certain services, I think it can make your life easier if you do speak Czech. And also, I guess in order for you to really know the Czech culture and so on, you have definitely to go through the socializing with the Czech circle. And I don't know if you can do it without the language. I mean, you can do it in English and they speak in English with you, but you would miss out

on many things in the translation, I guess. It's like, you know, explaining a baghrir to an American in English, like a pancake, but it's not really a pancake.

interviewer: Yeah, a lot is lost in translation. This is a very good example. Do you feel like there's been a change in you since you came to Prague? Culturally speaking, did you change some of your habits or some of your values, and beliefs, since you've lived here for a while now? Or do you think that you don't want to, you refuse to change your personality, and you're like, no, I will stay the same?

Interviewee: I think one thing changed is that, I don't know, but the fact that people here spend a lot of time outside, outdoors, I was like, yeah, because in Morocco we don't really do that. I mean, in my family, where I come from, we would spend most of our time indoors. So I was like, yeah, I want to do that. So I would go out just to go on a walk, which I would not do in the city. I would go out just to go on a walk, which I would not do in Morocco, for example. Very rarely. If I'm not with someone, I would not go out just to wander around, for example. Other than that, I don't know, nothing much. I stockpile, I used to stockpile a lot. My fridge would be full all the time. And here, since I don't have a car, it was like breaking through that habit of stockpiling, just making a short list of the minimum essentials that I need, because I can't carry big bags. And I think Czechs do that too.

Interviewer: They stockpile? Or do they just have a short grocery list?

Interviewee: Exactly. Because most of them use public transportation. So it's not convenient to go back. Because back home, you go to Carrefour, and the whole stroller is full.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about your job, please. Because I know you already explained, but we weren't recording. So you don't have to go into as much detail. But I just want to know how you found your employment here in Prague. And what kind of work do you do? And if you faced any barriers when you got here. I know you got recruited as a talent, so obviously not. But maybe you faced other issues, like getting your card or anything that you faced at work. And maybe the kind of education you had before working. Maybe just a brief mention of that.

Interviewee: Okay. So I didn't find it a challenge to find my job, because I didn't have to look up for a job. Since I relocated to the same company I was working with. What was the second question again?

interviewer: What kind of job do you do? And you already answered the first question, so that's great. Maybe a description and if you faced any challenges once you got here and started working.

interviewee: Okay. So I didn't face any challenges with work. Because work was the one thing that did not change, basically. Because I didn't even change roles when I came. I was still doing the same job. My manager was the same and he is not based here. So I didn't face any challenges at work. I'm a demand planning manager, I work in the supply chain. It's like a mix of data analysis and collaboration. That's all. Work now sounds very boring.

Interviewer: I remember everything you said before, so I'm going to use that. What is your future looking like in relation to Prague? Are you trying to just get some quick experience here? Is it like a transit country for you? The Czech Republic? Or are you maybe trying to stay here long term?

Interviewee: That's something I still have to give a thought to. I like Prague. But I don't really have a firm plan so far. I like the city so far. I was considering going to Canada in the past. But it's a different lifestyle and environment compared to Europe. It's something I don't have a fixed plan for yet. I'm open to whatever will come my way. I will decide later. You have the only character that could influence you to stay or leave. Better prospects at work.

Interviewee: Not really. I'm married, so there is a family life behind it as well. My husband actually did not join me yet.

Interviewer: Is he coming here?

Interviewee: He's planning to. The story behind it is that when I got the relocation offer to move here.....my husband could have relocated with me at the same time.....using the family reunification. But somehow the laws here would not... He would get his residence permit, but he would not be eligible to work for one year. So it was not very appealing to him. And also we were not sure because even for me I was like.....I'm going to go. If I don't like it, I can come back home. My husband was like, okay, I encourage you. Go live the opportunity and do whatever you want. But spend a year minimum until you decide that you want to stay longer.....before me making all the effort to change everything and look for a new job.

interviewer: Is your husband also an engineer?

Interviewee: Yes, my husband is also an engineer, but he's an IT engineer. It's different. So now that the year has passed, we are considering to come. And basically for the time being he's waiting for a relocation opportunity within his company. Because I saw that it worked perfectly. It was smooth for me. So I guess that's the perfect scheme to go for.....instead of having to come first and look for a job. We'll see.

Interviewer: So you guys do plan to live here a bit longer?

Interviewee: Yes, but not for a lifetime. We still don't know actually. I guess we'll make that decision when we decide to have kids. I believe.

Interviewer: And did you talk to your husband about Prague and Czech culture? Does he know what it's like to be here as a Moroccan?

Interviewee: Yes. And does the idea appeal to him?

Interviewee: Yeah. We even compared it to France for example. We prefer Prague a hundred times over France.

Interviewer: Really? Most Moroccans usually opt for countries like France. Why?

Interviewee: I don't know. There's so much history there that makes it, not the ideal place to go to. Given the amount of racism you face, like just being brown for example. Both of us look brownish. Not brownish, but like... Mat? yeah.

Interviewer: Which is beautiful by the way.

Interviewee: Yeah, but like there you get labeled.

Interviewer: Actually, some people that I interviewed also got some remarks, some slurs that we would not understand, but some Czechs explained to the Moroccan person that I interviewed that that was a slur for a brown person. So it does exist here as well, unfortunately.

Interviewee: I guess the fact that we don't speak the language, we don't really know what is happening.

Interviewer: Because most Moroccan people speak fluent French, so you will understand, but here it's much different. I wanted to ask you about your relationship with the people back home. Do you still maintain friendships there? Do you still have a web of friends? And do you still call your family often?

Interviewee: Yeah, I do. I know you're probably in contact with your husband all the time, but have you maintained the same kind of relationship you had with your friends and family when you came here?

Interviewer: Yeah, with my family definitely. I talk to my mom every day. And my dad also, before he passed away.

interviewee: Yeah, family is important to me and I tend to keep in constant contact with them.

Interviewer: Did they play an important role for you in your first week or month here? Were you calling them constantly to get support?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you telling your new stories to your mom or was it like just, oh hey, this is what I'm doing?

interviewee: New stories? Like about life here? Yeah, definitely. I remember I would go to the castle or wherever and I would just send them a picture or a video or whatever.

Interviewer: And what about your friends? Did you keep your web of friends? Yeah, some of them. Some of them are definitely more frequent than others, which makes sense. Yeah, no big change there. But mostly with family. Family is important to me.

Interviewer: Do you often reflect on your identity as a Moroccan living in Prague or has it never occurred to you? Because I know that maybe you didn't change much, but there must be small changes that you will notice over time. So maybe you can tell me a little bit about your personal reflections on your identity as a Moroccan, the kind of values and beliefs you have, and maybe if you think they morphed now that you live in Europe.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. For example, when I was back in Morocco, I never thought of myself like... When I came over here, I realized actually that I have so many identities being Moroccan, being Berber, being Muslim, being Mediterranean especially. Because when the weather gets so grey here, I'm like, I miss the beach so much. And that's only when I realized that being Mediterranean really means something and that it's in me. That's one aspect of it.

interviewer: But it's like... Do you see yourself changing to fit in more once your husband joins and you maybe have a family here in the future? Or do you think that you will keep your Moroccan-ness and just try to...

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know. How do you identify Moroccan-ness actually?

Interviewer: How would you define it? Moroccan-ness? I mean, maybe one aspect of it would be helping other people even outside in the street for example. That's a Moroccan aspect, a Moroccan trait that maybe people do not know. Like here, basically, if someone falls, no one cares. But for me, I would be like, do you need help? I guess... Relationship with food as well, although I do not cook anything Moroccan here. I don't know what else I connect with being Moroccan. Being close to family, but that's not typically Moroccan. That's not only Moroccan. Interviewer: You said that Moroccan people help people in the street. Is that something that you miss?

Interviewee: No, not really typically. Not that I miss it, but if I am in the street, if I am able to help someone, even whom I don't know, I would do it without thinking twice. While I think people here would think twice.

Interviewer: Have you noticed that it's not their first instinct to help others?

Interviewee: I saw a video actually about it. So basically, maybe I judged fast, but there was a video about it and I was like, oh yeah.

Interviewer: A video about how people are distant?

Interviewee: Yeah, maybe it was an experiment. People falling down the metro stairs or something like that, and no one cared because everyone thought that they were just drunk and they just moved past them. That's all.

Interviewer: If you were to meet a Moroccan like yourself that is going to move to Prague, what would you say to them? If you were going to give them advice so they would integrate or assimilate better?

Interviewee: Connect with expats first, I guess. I think that it's really helpful to connect with expats. Because you get to discover the city together, basically. I think that would be my first piece of advice. And also, especially if they are moving alone, for me it was really interesting to... Because especially since I was married, I'm married for 7 years now, so for 5 years I was living with a person, with someone else. And when I came here and I moved alone, as I said, it was good for me to think about the fact that I have so much time for myself, to discover myself, and to give to myself alone. That was a nice thing. Just

savor the opportunity that you are living by yourself in a new place. I guess moving to a new place is an igniter for many deep reflections about who you are, what you cherish and how to take care of yourself, and how to listen to yourself. But that's not specific to Prague, I guess. It's an expat experience.

Interviewer: If you were to summarize your experience here so far, and your experience in Czech culture or Prague culture, how would you summarize it?

Interviewee: It's been great so far, except for the veggies and fruits.

Interviewer: That's your only culture shock? No variety.

Interviewee: Yeah, there isn't. The lack of variety hurts sometimes. Sometimes you just want good quality cheese and you can't find it. And you're like, why, why, why? I think the food is the only thing that is. But otherwise, the city is lively, it's super safe. You get to experience many things. There are several events like that scheduled every week. But we do that also in Morocco, but not much. I think here the people or the culture in general kind of expresses gratefulness for every season, which I did not use to feel in Morocco. Maybe because we don't really have different seasons that are defined, because it's not really cold in winter. But here I see people doing winter activities in winter, and as soon as spring comes over everyone is out in the parks and so on, and in summer as well. They would be doing summer activities. I like that. It taught me something.

interviewer: I think I'm done with my questions. If there's anything that you think is important to include or something that we didn't talk about, you can go ahead and tell me. And if not, we can just end it.

Interviewee: I'm good.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you.

[End of Interview]

## **Naoual**

Interviewer: I start by asking Interviewees about their names, ages, occupations, and how long they've been living in Prague.

Interviewee: hum, okay. Should I answer?

Interviewer: yes.

Interviewee: my name is Naoual, I am thirty-eight years old, and I've been in Prague Czech Republic for thirteen years.

Interviewer: what do you do for work if I may ask?

Interviewee: I work in an exchange office, I change from one currency to another, from the Czech crown to the euro or vice versa, and other currencies.

Interviewer: can you tell me about the context of your move, why did you come to settle here?

Interviewee: I got married, I moved here after my marriage.

Interviewer: is your husband Czech or Moroccan?

Interviewee: he's Moroccan, he lived here for twenty-six years I think.

Interviewer: and he lived here before you met him?

Interviewee: yes, that's correct. He lived and worked here before we got married.

Interviewer: did you meet your husband in Morocco?

Interviewee: yes, in Morocco. He's a member of my extended family.

Interviewer: I see. When you got married and decided to move here did you do a bit of research on what the Czech Republic might be like, did you have an idea of what Prague is like, or did you jump on the opportunity?

Interviewee: I did a bit of research, just to see what the city looks like, the weather, what's there to see, just general.

Interviewer: did you have any expectations about Prague before your move?

Interviewee: no, I did not. I knew no one who lived here, so it's not like I could ask. I looked at Google but that's not always realistic.

Interviewer: can we go back to your first week, and even your first month here, how did it go? Did anything shock you and what were the main challenges that you faced when you got to Prague?

Interviewee: when it comes to challenges, no one spoke English especially the older generation even middle-aged people have very limited knowledge of English. Finding myself in a new country was quite new to me, especially because Prague is a touristy city, I liked it here.

Interviewer: did you put any effort into integrating with the people and culture that surrounded you after you moved here?

Interviewee: when I came here I got to meet new people from Morocco, they introduced me to places, and they acquainted me with how much the Czech crown is worth, they showed me how to move around the city. I also got to meet Czechs, and they helped me learn a bit of the language. I studied the Czech language and that's it.

Interviewer: how did you meet Moroccans here, was it through social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, or did your spouse help with the introductions, can you tell me about it?

Interviewee: it was first through my husband, he introduced me to his friends and their wives, afterward I joined Facebook and a WhatsApp group that groups almost all the Moroccan women that live here in Prague but also in Brno and other Czech cities. We sometimes plan outings and we meet, some members join from Brno as well when it's possible.

Interviewer: you mentioned your struggle with the language. In which ways did you learn, were you trying to learn by yourself, did you take classes, or maybe you reached out to the integration center here?

Interviewee: at first I took classes and paid for them myself, then I got introduced to the integration center I am not sure about the name, I went to classes there for six months. However, when it comes to the language the classroom is not enough you need contact with the locals to practice. Some people that went to classes with me ended up forgetting everything they learned because they had no contact with the locals. When you have Czech people to practice with, you end up learning a lot of new vocabulary that school would not teach you and it sticks to your memory better.

Interviewer: so after learning the language, you tried to practice with the people surrounding you outside and at work?

Interviewee: yes, exactly.

Interviewer: what else did you do to integrate into life here apart from the initiative you took to learn the language?

Interviewee: it's not hard to get used to Prague. I am originally from Marrakesh, and I find both cities to be similar, they both have the tourist town aspect and it was not hard for me to get used to life here. When you have friends to go out with and you get acquainted with people, that also makes adapting to a new environment easier, if you stay secluded you would never get acclimated even if you live here for years on end. For me personally, I found it very easy to get used to life here.

Interviewer: for you the most important thing is to have a social circle to spend time with.

Interviewee: for sure.

Interviewer: apart from the Moroccan circle that you mentioned, whom you met through your husband and the social media groups, what does the rest of your social network look like? Do you have any Czech or international friends? Can you please describe your social circle?

Interviewee: I have a Syrian friend, a Tunisian friend and I have two Czech friends, one of them I don't get to meet that often because of her work schedule, and mine, we don't always get the chance. My other Czech friend is a very close friend of mine and she is also my neighbor, since I moved nearby, we meet every day.

Interviewer: Can you describe your relationship with the other Moroccan women living here? you mentioned that you make the time to meet during holidays.

Interviewee: my relationship with them is excellent. We meet during holidays, special occasions, and birthdays and sometimes we invite each other to cook Moroccan food when we miss it. An excellent friendship honestly, the Moroccan women are like no other.

Interviewer: would you say these people made your adaptation process smoother?

Interviewee: for sure, they made it easier. The family presence or the lack might I say, these people fill this void, of course, there's nothing like family but it comes close, however, you feel like you have people there for you when you want to have fun, or when you're not feeling great, you find that you have a support system of people that are Moroccan just like yourself.

Interviewer: alright, and you mentioned your husband introduced you to a lot of the people you currently surround yourself with, can you mention some of the other things he did to ease your adaptation here?

Interviewee: so, my husband introduced me to his friends, and they introduced me to their wives. He then removed himself from the equation to let me handle my things, so I would rely on myself. Honestly, these people I got to know here, they helped a lot.

Interviewer: so you were left to fend for yourself?

Interviewee: yes, after he made the introductions he said my job is done here, rely on yourself hahahahaha.

Interviewer: and what's your relationship like with the people back home, do you still go see them in Morocco? Do you call?

Interviewee: my family, for sure. I go visit during the summer. When it comes to my parents, you know the deal, you have to reach out every two days, I try to call every day, it's important. My other family members I call during the holidays or special occasions.

Interviewer: you currently work in an exchange office, did you have any difficulties finding work when you moved here, or did face some difficulties?

Interviewee: no, I didn't find a job easily. Because of the language barrier, I had some difficulties, my first job was at a pizzeria owned by a Moroccan, then I got pregnant with twins so it was difficult to continue working, I stayed home until my children went to kindergarten or like they say here *školka*, I then worked at their kindergarten as an assistant cook just to be close to my children and have the same schedule so I would take them in the morning and we'd all go back home after they were done. I stayed home for less than a year, I worked on my language skills and then studied for a bit to pass an exam at *Národní Banka* to get my license so I could work at the exchange office.

Interviewer: do you have any colleagues at the office, or do you work alone?

Interviewee: I work alone, I alternate with another coworker. When it's not me at the office, he takes over but we're never there at the same time.

Interviewer: do you have contact with the Czech locals through work, or do you deal with tourists exclusively since it's an exchange office?

Interviewee: no, no I meet Czechs as well. When they want to travel they can't use the Czech crown in other countries. I have all kinds of customers, maybe exchange offices in the city center work with tourists exclusively, I am located a bit far from the center so I deal with both tourists and locals.

Interviewer: so you have constant contact with both the locals and tourists at work.

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: do you think of work as a means to earn a living or do you also consider it a way to have constant contact with the locals?

Interviewee: I think work helped me a lot, it's not just to earn money, working allowed me to meet with people. I am also very comfortable in my job, I like it, I don't do it just because I need an income.

Interviewer: do you discuss the future with your husband, are you planning to stay here or maybe raise the kids and then return to Morocco?

Interviewee: when it comes to my husband, he does not plan to stay here forever, especially because of the nature of our work. If the Czech Republic switches to the Euro, she says we might have to move countries. I, on the other hand, am very against the idea, I came here to an alien environment and stayed for thirteen years, and I refuse to go through this experience again and start over in a different country. So far he's been following my wishes, but when the currency changes to Euro I don't know how we will deal with that, we might have to switch jobs, we like what we do, it's a comfortable job.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate, please?

Interviewee: so if the currency is switched to Euro, working in an exchange office will disappear because people won't need it anymore. They'll probably take care of other currency at the bank. My husband says that this will push us to move, I got used to it here and so did my children, they're now in the fifth grade next year they'll be going onto the sixth grade, it will be very difficult for us to start from scratch in a different country.

Interviewer: you feel like you found your place here, and you don't want to move to another country?

Interviewee: yes.

Interviewer: Can you describe the difference between when you just moved here and now? Can you tell me what it felt like to be in a new environment versus spending thirteen years here?

Interviewee: the difference, at first I did not know the language, everything looked weird, here it's there is a lot of order, and our country still needs to work on that. For me it's all about knowing the language, I am not saying that you need to speak it like a Czech, but rather have enough to be able to function. Before I had issues with everything, if I needed to return something at the groceries, I needed someone to go there with me. If I was visiting the doctor, I needed someone there to help, if I wanted to go to a government office...now, I don't need that.

Damaged audio

Interviewee: wrong words and everyone would criticize me for that, you should've taught them the language. It was the other way around for me, I used them to learn language.

Interviewer: they were born here and are growing up here, I am assuming they have a better knowledge of the language. It's great to learn from them, that's great.

Interviewee: yes.

Interviewer: you mentioned that work is the main reason that would push you to move away, are there any other factors that might affect that decision? Will you retire back home? Will you stay here until your children finish their schooling?

Interviewee: I intend to stay here until my kids are independent, why not until they get married and have life figured out, maybe then I might be able to go back and be close to my parents, may god bless them with a long life.

Interviewer: have you ever had a negative experience here in Prague? It could be in the past or something that happened recently.



Interviewee: no, honestly not even once, thirteen years here and I've never been treated with xenophobia, I do hear from my friends that they've been made uncomfortable with looks, but for me, it never happened.

Interviewer: that contributed to you feeling comfortable here. What about culture? Do you take time to teach your children about Moroccan culture, do you celebrate religious holidays, I know religion is important so how do you balance the origin country's culture with this environment?

Interviewee: I try to show them our religion, during Ramadan when they see me fast they ask me about it and I tell them about it. Sometimes they do Ramadan with me when they don't have school although they're not at the age where it's expected of them. I hope when they reach that age they decide to do it, I will do my best. When it comes to holidays, I celebrate both Muslim holidays and Czech ones like *Vánoce*. I didn't use to celebrate *Vánoce* but when I noticed that they get asked about it in school, like what they did for decorations and what they got as presents, they came back home embarrassed, this made them feel like they were different, especially since their classroom is all Czech, my children were feeling like there was a void, so I started doing it for them so they can talk about in class, I make sure to explain that these are not our traditions and they are not part of our religion, I also get them presents before the twenty fourth, so they can tell their *učitelka* about it. I also take the time to tell them about our Eid, it's unfortunate because the mosque is too far from where I live and I also worked during that day, but my husband took my children because Moroccans gather during Eid in one of the malls to celebrate. I take them back to Morocco during eid adha, and they always ask me why we slaughter sheep, anyways I try to tell show them what's ours and what's not and find a balance.

Interviewer: so you try to expose them to both cultures equally?

Interviewee: exactly.

Interviewer: do you celebrate or incorporate any other Czech traditions at home apart from Christmas?

Interviewee: a part of Christmas they celebrate easter at school, but I don't do anything at the house for that.

Interviewer: if you were to give advice or adaptation tips to another Moroccan person that wants to settle in Prague as you did, what would you say?

Interviewee: the main thing for people that want to settle here is to learn the language. I ask a lot of the women that I meet if they intend to stay and build a life here, if it's a yes I immediately advise them to go learn the language. There are places where you can learn Czech for free now. If they don't intend to stay for long, they can get by with a little English or whatever, because it's a waste of time to learn the language since you won't be able to use it outside of the Czech Republic. So yes, learning the language is essential. I sometimes get annoyed when people tell me they can't get used to it here, this place is very homey, I don't understand them or what they're looking for. So yes, language is everything, you don't need to be fluent, just be able to communicate and convey meaning. From my personal experience, Czechs are patient, they try to simplify speech and listen carefully especially if you tell them you don't understand. This is my personal experience, other people might have lived it differently. When I was pregnant, I had a wonderful experience at the hospital. The treatment was excellent. Some people had negative experiences and were treated poorly, so I am speaking about myself and how I lived it. Again, language is everything. When I was pregnant I spoke no Czech and that was an obstacle when communicating with my doctor or nurse, I had to use my phone and make them speak to another person so I would understand what was going on.

Interviewer: can you tell me a bit more about your experience at the hospital, and maybe elaborate on what you mean by your homey?

Interviewee: during my pregnancy, I had a Moroccan lady with me at all times, she speaks Czech. That's her job she helps people that don't speak the language in exchange for monetary compensation for her time. We ended up getting along and becoming friends, she was there for all my doctor visits and during my delivery as well. I had to be hospitalized three times during my pregnancy, I would either use the little bit of English I know or just pick up the phone and call her and she would translate everything. When I say that the country is homey, I meant that when you're going through a rough patch, you can just go outside and walk by the river. I don't feel estranged at all, I don't know how to explain this to you, I might be repeating myself but I will still insist on the language, when you know the language and understand people around you...I don't know how to say this, it's difficult.

Interviewer: take your time until you find the right words, I think I understand what you mean, I just want you to elaborate on your feelings.

Interviewee: I mean I don't feel like an alien, I feel like I am at home. For me, Prague and Marrakesh are on the same level. Maybe if I didn't have my parents back home I wouldn't go there, I'd go every three years just to see my country of origin and whatnot, but my parents are the ones that bring me back.

Interviewer: I think you consider Prague not as a secondary home but your main home, since your family and life are here. Did you experience any culture shocks when you just got here?

Interviewee: when I moved here, the thing that I noticed to be out of the ordinary for me was how everyone was in a hurry to get somewhere, you know how people are in Morocco, we move at our own pace. Now I don't feel it, maybe because I started moving at the same pace. Another thing is order everywhere, in Morocco when you want to get on the bus, it's complete chaos, everyone wants to get in. Here everything is in order you stand in line and wait for people to get off, same with escalators you stand on the right and let people pass, in hospitals you grab a number from the machine and wait for your turn. Now these things are also common in Morocco, back then when I move to Prague it was not a thing. There was a big difference between Morocco and here back then, now thank goodness that our country is catching up.

Interviewer: did it take you long to get used to the Czech way of life, did you start following their rules the minute you got here, or did you need some time to adjust?

Interviewee: a little bit...I can't quantify exactly but it took me a while to get used to their ways of life, I am not sure. You learn by observing and you follow them, I don't know.

Interviewer: so you were not opposed to adopting a new way of life that is unlike the Moroccan way? A lot of people are opposed to change but you were open to it.

Interviewee: Well, I adopted their ways because what they do is right. Why would I act like a savage, while they have everything in order? I wouldn't do something if it was wrong, I'd follow anything that seems right, unless it goes against my religion, like eating porc, I taught my children not to eat it, and at first, it was difficult because they'd ask me questions like, 'if it's bad, why do Czechs eat it?' they once had it at school by mistake, I don't know if they gave it to them by mistake, they came back home and told me about it, and then they asked me why I say that porc is not good because according to them it tasted good hahaha hahaha, they ask questions about that. So when it comes to things like this, eating pork or consuming alcohol, I am not gonna follow the Czech way, however, their ways of life and orderly systems are great so why would I not follow along?

Interviewer: so you take what suits you and apply it to adapt better, but you are very conservative when it comes to habits that breach your religious beliefs?

Interviewee: exactly.

Interviewer: Since you spent thirteen years here, do you ever reflect on the ways you might have changed after changing your environment?

Interviewee: let me think... I don't think I changed radically, I may have changed for the better. I don't think I am different from the person I used to be. I might have stopped overthinking about the future, I now live one day at a time and let myself have faith in where god might take me.

[End of Interview]

## **Halima**

Interviewer: normally I start my interview by asking my respondents to state their names, how long they've lived in Prague, and what's their main occupation.

Interviewee: do you want the full name?

Interviewer: not just your first name, please.

Interviewee: my name is Halima, I am 45, and it's been..well since October 2009 that I live here

Interviewer: what's your occupation?

Interviewee: I came to the Czech Republic in October like I just stated, after one month I found work in a shop that sells crystals for 2 weeks, while I was looking for what will be my current job. I work as CRC which means I do customer service. they have a branch here for reclamation and reservation. This branch takes care of European customers and I've worked here since December 2009

Interviewer: what's the company name, please

Interviewee: it's called Blue link

Interviewer: can you tell me more about the context of the move, what made you move from Morocco to Prague

Interviewee: I never thought about immigration, I had no interest in leaving the country, I worked as a commercial agent I was stable with a good salary. It's faith that I met my husband who was living in the Czech Republic at the time, we met and then we decided to get married and we decided to move here because he already had a child from his first marriage, the kind needed his father so we came here

Interviewer: is your husband Czech?

Interviewee: he's Moroccan with a Czech nationality

Interviewer: And you met in Morocco or?

Interviewee: yes we met in Morocco, I worked in a company that sold luxury building and decoration materials. That day I happened to be in the showroom and he was there asking for information on a type of marble, we started talking and that's how it happened hahaha

Interviewer: when you agreed to marry your husband, did you start doing some research about the culture before your move, or did you deem it enough to just move because of your marriage

Interviewee: a little bit, not a lot. I thought I will go and I will try it if it works it's good and if not I can always return to Morocco, I am up to trying new things.

Interviewer: did you have some expectations about Prague before the move, did you imagine it to be a certain way?

Interviewee: so..my first year here as a Moroccan I can't say it was easy, it was hard. You know about our weather, we have sun all year long even when it's cold. Here there's no sun during winter. People's personalities, it's night and day if you compare them to our culture. Hahaha, we are open and this was difficult. Plus in Morocco, we have bigger houses, I had to be content with a smaller apartment here, that's living in Europe but I decided I'd work and make my life better, I took it upon myself to get used to life here before taking a rash decision.

What helped me a lot is getting this job, my work is filled with expatriates, which allowed me to meet Czech people that spoke English and French, this helped me understand that they might be reserved but when they get to know you they become friendly, and that is the opposite of my first impression. After a year I was starting to integrate, Czech Republic was becoming my second home. Now when I go to Morocco I spend a maximum of one month and then I need to return here to my home in Prague.

Interviewer: so you think of Prague as your second home?

Interviewee: Exactly

Interviewer: you mentioned the difference in weather and the reserved Czech nature that's different from how Moroccans behave, did you have any other cultural shocks or things that are widely different from where you came from?

Interviewee; so if you compare today to 2009 there is a huge amelioration. When you'd go to the grocery store they would not make an effort to talk to you in another language. Normally, you won't learn the language in one month because it is very different it's a Slavic language and difficult, and most of the time I would try English, french but I would get no response. That was a shock, they wouldn't try, they have no regard for service, not like Moroccans, when a foreigner comes to the supermarket they try to help as much as possible, here they don't care, it's not their issue.

Interviewer: can you tell me more about the challenges you faced, when you were navigating your married life here trying to find your circle, and how you adapted, maybe some of the things that left an impact to the point where they are a part of you now?

Interviewee; the main obstacle was the language. Finding someone that speaks something other than Czech was difficult. My stepson didn't live with us he lived with his grandparents and would come during weekends and holidays, I never had an issue with him we have a very special relationship and we appreciate each other. Food wise, you have to adapt, of course, we have more choices when it comes to fruits and vegetables here the options are meager or else it is very expensive. We are Muslims, and you have to find where to buy halal items, but you get used to it. The biggest obstacle is the language, when you decide to learn and get to a level where you can communicate with people around you even if you make mistakes your life will get significantly easier.

Interviewer: you keep mentioning the language, when did you decide that you were going to learn, did you try on the first month or the first year? What's your level right now, does it help in your quotidian?

Interviewee; So, I'd say at the moment I am at the A2 level. I get by when I go to administrative offices. It's a must because I have a son and I have to be able to speak to his school and whatnot. So I have to have the basics to communicate. I can't say I am fluent because it's a difficult language, the fact that I don't practice at work where we use French and English and of course, at home, we speak Moroccan Arabic, so when you can at least manage it opens a lot of doors for you, you get to even look things up on the internet, you at least know some keywords, and you can translate the rest. If one wants to live here you must have the language basics to survive.

Interviewer; so did you learn the language at home with your husband...

Interviewee: oh no no... I took classes, extensive classes for three months. I stopped then I took an extra three months. And I also went to language classes with the company I work for, I would go to improve and I am always trying to learn. I always pick up new words from my son, he's fluent in Czech and he always teaches me.

Interviewer: that's excellent, that's a great strategy. Apart from your family obviously, I wanted to know about your social circle at the moment, do you entertain relationships with Czechs, Moroccans, or internationals?

Interviewee; Where I live I have acquaintances, my neighbors. I say hi to my neighbors. You know the elderly don't always have people to converse with. And in our culture, we always have to be respectful of the elderly. I am acquainted with the Czech moms of my son's friends, I host playdates here in my house and they do that as well, during birthdays we mutually invite each other. Last time I was celebrating my son's birthday in a faraway location and I don't have a car I had a lot of heavy things I needed to move another mom offered to help me, and she gave me a ride. When I notice these initiatives, I feel integrated, they're not running away from you, it's a good thing.

Interviewer; and what about your social circle when it comes to Moroccan immigrants and expats here in Prague, like you mentioned before I know your jobs allowed you to meet a lot of expats and internationals, can you tell me about your relations with the people from you own kin?

Interviewee: you already know about the group, I know most people from there. We organize outings for our children to meet, and we go out between us. Of course, I have close friends as well, we call each other regularly and help each other whenever we need each other, if one of us is sick we take care of each other's kids.

Interviewer: Are these close ones all Moroccan?

Interviewee: yes, they are. Moroccan women married to Moroccan men and Moroccan women married to Czech men.

Interviewer: you mentioned your husband has Czech nationality, does he consider himself to be more Moroccan than Czech or the other way around?

Interviewee; I think we remain Moroccans to be honest, for him if we get the chance to return to Morocco, he won't hesitate

Interviewer; are you thinking of going back to settle permanently?

Interviewee; well, why not. Even if you're settled in a country for a long time, Morocco remains your origins, it's the family, the culture...

Interviewer: what could influence your decision to go back to Morocco versus staying here in the Czech Republic, I am talking five or ten years from now.

Interviewee; hum, well..what's keeping us here, you know it's my child's education, it's also the health care. When you go to Morocco and you check the prices of private schools it's exorbitant. Health care in Morocco is getting worse, at least here even if you don't have the money god forbid when you get sick the health care system will take care of you and your kids, you have your insurance card and you will be able to buy your medication. In Morocco, if you don't have money you will not be able to heal, and we know that very well. These are the two main reasons keeping us here. I can't tell you exactly when, not in the near future for sure, maybe when my son gets to university, and makes the choice between staying here in Prague or pursuing education somewhere else in Europe, meanwhile, we would go back home.

Interviewer: I see. Can we talk a bit more about the challenges and the strategies you used to get adapted to Prague? Considering that when you put an individual in a new environment they tend to try their luck everywhere, like trying to make friends at work, to join a club or a social media group. What's the formula that worked for you, it made you feel like you're towards being part of your new environment.

Interviewee: so, as I mentioned, when I joined work I met some expats, Czech and whatnot. For Czechs, I tried to ask a lot of questions about their culture, holidays, and what they do some of the things they do. I was lucky enough to have some colleagues that were also interested in my culture, they were open to traveling, so we exchanged a lot of information. We would hang out during our lunch breaks or team buildings. And some of them became close, so I would meet them outside of work. I had this Czech friend ask me for help because a friend of hers wanted to learn Arabic, so she organized a meeting and this year

she became a friend of mine as well, she lived two years in Tunisia and she came back here, so we would go out together. When we're around downtown we would visit monuments but have no idea about the history, when I'd go out with her she's tell me about history, like she'd show me Mozart used to live, she would show me around which made me like the country. With my husband, we would also go out and visit, he's not the kind of person that's stagnant, we visited a lot of other cities. This contributed to my growing attachment to the country

Interviewer: I heard similar things from other people that got married and moved here, some Interviewees told me that their Czech wives even helped them find halal food stores and mosques. Apart from your excursions did your husband contribute to your adaptation journey here in Prague since he lived here for years before you joined?

Interviewee: for sure, during my first month here my husband took a week off and we spent time taking the tram and metro lines from one end to the other. This made me feel independent, and able to go out on my own, without needing someone to accompany me. The fact that he thought me how to move around the city was important. Of course, when it comes to our Muslim customs, we'd go there on Fridays like all other Muslims, and when it comes to the shops we of course visited, Of course, it's different when a Moroccan is married to a Czech.

Interviewer: and going back to your mention of the extensive language courses you participated in, did you take the time to visit any integration centers?

Interviewee: no, I had no idea they existed in 2010, I didn't have any information about these integration centers back then, the classes I took I paid for myself. I think the integration center opened its doors in 2016 or 2017, I did go briefly but the lessons were too basic for me I already had a solid grasp of what they were teaching.

Interviewer: ah, okay. And have you had any negative experiences here, did you ever feel like you were treated unfairly or with prejudice, when it comes to Czech people?

Interviewee: so, it was one time. It happened while I was in a restaurant with my son and this Czech man started talking to me in English saying go back to your country nobody wants you here, you only instigate chaos, all while I was sitting calmly eating my meal with my son, we did nothing, a mom with her son grabbing food, he heard me call my son Youssef so he understood we were arab, I think. I panicked I didn't want to respond because my son was there. Another Czech man from a neighboring table intervened telling him he had no right to speak to her in this manner and this country is not just yours, they had a back and forth and some other women joined the conversation and informed him that they were going to call the authorities, it was a good and bad experience.

Interviewer: you felt protected I am assuming but also quite shaken up from the way that person spoke to you.

Interviewee: yes, exactly. I think I was quite lucky, I know some friends that had worse experiences.

Interviewer: can you tell me about these stories, or give me an example?

Interviewee: I have a friend that wears the veil, while she was waiting for the metro she was taunted and attacked by some teenagers, they grabbed her by her veil, and she was terrified. Another friend of mine that also wears the veil got followed by security while she was shopping and he asked to look through her bag when she was leaving. It's racist treatment like this.

Interviewer: I see, can we go back to how you got introduced to the WhatsApp group, how did you come to come across the group?

Interviewee: so at first, my husband has friends that are also married to Moroccan women, he introduced me and then a friendship came to be. You know when it's just you and a handful of people in a country,

you just get closer. One person introduces you to another, There's this girl that was all alone here, my husband and I helped, she moved to France now. She introduced us to another person. It's like a chain one person introduces you to another and then you end up knowing a lot of people. Well, the essential thing is that this is how I got to meet these friends of mine, their husbands are acquainted with mine and when I got here I knew nobody so he introduced us and we became friends.

Interviewer: Are your friends and acquaintances all Moroccan or Czech?

Interviewee: they're Moroccans.

Interviewer: so your husband did play an important role in helping you establish a social circle.

Interviewee: yes, absolutely

Interviewer: while your son is growing up here, are you taking the time to teach him Moroccan Arabic?

Interviewee: yes, I do speak Moroccan Arabic to him at home. For me it's a principal when we go to Morocco if he speaks Czech no one will understand him, he learns Czech and English at school and not everyone back in Morocco will be able to understand him, so I speak to him in Moroccan Arabic, he is not perfect but he can communicate, you know the unperfect Moroccan Arabic.

Interviewer: unperfect, but he can still communicate.

Interviewee: most of the essential words he needs to communicate, he knows.

Interviewer: Since your son is growing up here, and goes to school here, he's surrounded by Czechs most of the time, how do you balance the culture he's exposed to with Moroccan culture, what's your home like, since there's a mix of two cultures that are very different?

Interviewee: I teach him about both, we live in a foreign country, and he has to know the culture. Some people are against celebrating Christmas because we are Muslims, I know that and I don't believe in Christian customs but I still get a tree and presents for my son because he's exposed to that at school. Just like Ramadan, he prays, he learns the Coran, and we decorate the house. He has to get acquainted with both cultures. If I prohibit him from doing things, he might feel secluded from Czech culture.

Interviewer: Okay, so you make sure there's an equilibrium and that he's exposed to both cultures. What about yourself, do you make sure there's balance in the way you're exposed to both cultures? You mentioned earlier that no matter what you stay Moroccan, meaning yourself and your family, which might mean that you are very attached to your culture and identity, how do balance between your ethnic background and the society you live and work in?

Interviewee: so, at work, it's a multicultural environment, and we each respect one another. My colleagues know that it's Ramadan and they respect that, there's even a small room for prayer and people are very respectful of that. When it comes to my home, we cook Moroccan, we speak Moroccan, and maybe when it comes to media we consume both. When it comes to holidays as I mentioned prior we celebrate both to make my son happy, when easter was happening in the middle of Ramadan I can't stop his school activities because I am fasting, I just don't celebrate them as part of a religion, even Czech don't celebrate these things as part of a religious tradition, I try to do it on a very shallow level, and I focus on celebrating our religious holidays when I have time we travel since my son loves Morocco when I ask him where he wants to spend his holiday he always wants to go to Morocco and adores it.

Interviewer: do you go back to Morocco every year?

Interviewee: from one to two times per year. When we go during a holiday, I always try to explain to my son how it happens in our home country, you shouldn't be too rigid and say that things are haram, you have to be gentle, for example, porc, we don't eat that. In kindergarten I signed a paper so they would not feed him pork, when he got to primary school he serves his meal for himself, so I tried to explain that we Muslims don't consume it. The school provides an app where I can choose his meals, however, I noticed

that my son leans more towards beef and chicken and he also always enquires if sauces contain some bits of porc, and that is delightful

Interviewer: you're taking a lenient approach to teaching him about your customs.

Interviewee: yes, lenient and I teach him that difference is okay, even if his friends eat porc does not mean they're bad people. This is quite tricky, I found it quite difficult, you know kids ask a lot of questions, the whys and hows. Why is porc bad and why would they eat it if it was gonna harm them? It's okay for him to ask questions as long as he respects that part of our culture. When he's invited to birthdays, all his peers know that he does not consume pork and they give him a replacement.

Interviewer: when it comes to the topic of religion, considering that the Czech Republic is very different from Morocco, however, that was not a problem for you, at work, you have a very tolerant environment and respectful colleagues...

Interviewee: no, no issue at all. I told you, at work, you have all the nationalities, French, English, American, Spanish, Algerians, Tunisians, Egyptians, and we all respect each other mutually. This is the pillar of society when people go through interviews at my company and if they feel like you might have a fraction of racism in you, you're disqualified.

Interviewer: so there was no issue abiding by what your religion dictates whether it is food related or activities that you would carry out back in Morocco?

Interviewee: no, no issue. If we can't celebrate something at the mosque we do it at home. I don't know if you ever assisted at one of the religious holidays here at the mosque but they tend to give presents to children and they organize special events to make our religion appeal to them, so there's no issue, thank god.

Interviewer: if you were to speak to a Moroccan national that was about to come and settle here in Prague, whether it would be a long-term immigrant or an expatriate that would come here for work from one to two years, what is the advice you'd give them that worked for you on your adaptation and integration journey?

Interviewee: that's what I do with Moroccans that recently come here, the advice I give them is to learn the language, once you learn the language everything becomes easier. If you don't speak the language everything will be difficult, starting from the grocery store, they will be lost with food items, and you don't know what they are, the key to having a good life here in the Czech Republic is to have a language base.

Interviewer: you don't think English and French are enough? They gave you a portal to meet other expatriates...so the most important step is to learn Czech?

Interviewee: sometimes doctors don't speak English, and sometimes you have to pay extra for some doctors that speak another language. When I say that you need to know the language I in no way mean you need to be fluent, you just need to be able to communicate with others, they will realize that you are making an effort, and they appreciate that, and they will speak slower and sometimes they even take the time to write. When I was pregnant, I had a doctor that would write things for me and would ask me to write down questions and translate them, at least we could communicate.

Interviewer: do you have any other tips for Moroccans coming here?

Interviewee: to respect their culture, we all make the mistake of comparing. You cannot change them, so you must respect the country and the culture. When it comes to my personal experience, whether it is in administrative offices, hospitals, etc. if you have all your documents, they'd never refuse you service, sometimes people say that workers don't want to cooperate with them, I don't think that's the issue. For me, language and respect, you cannot impose your customs, you can do that in your home, but you cannot



force people to do things your way. Since you came to their country you must persevere, while maintaining your principles.

Interviewer: do you ever take the time to reflect on how you might have changed as a person when you settled here, your ideas or identity?

Interviewee: of course, I changed a lot, I made a 180-degree change.

Interviewer: can you tell me more about that, in which ways have you changed?

Interviewee: before and after getting married, you usually change a lot. I used to care about appearances quite a lot and material things. When I got here and I observed how people live, they are simple and have priorities, I changed a lot. It doesn't mean I stopped caring about my looks altogether, I am just simple now. On another note, when you go outside here, you notice that workers have no supervision, yet they still do their jobs, they take their breaks, and then carry on, we don't have that back home. This pushes you to be more responsible and not necessarily need supervision to do your job. Also, I feel like I am responsible for giving a good image to the Czechs of Moroccans, if I reflect a good image fellow Moroccans might have an easier time integrating Czech society.

Interviewer: Do you think it's necessary to take a bit of their culture to advance in society?

Interviewee: you take the good things and leave the bad things, they never get in your business and they always do what makes them comfortable. They also have bad things, they put their parents in old people's homes, we would never do that because of the special bond we share with our families. This is just an example, they can definitely keep stuff like this, and I'll only take the good things from them.

Interviewer: when you were new here, did you rush back to Morocco at the first chance you got?

Interviewee: when I got here, I stayed for one year and a half before returning to Morocco.

Interviewer: was it intentional, because of bureaucracy issues?

Interviewee: no, I never had such issues, I came with a visa and then my permanent residency card was ready, after that, I applied for permanent residency. Police came to our home and checked on us, I was pregnant at the time, and they simply informed me that I need to go pick it up. I didn't go because it was financially difficult and I just started a new job, so I waited for a little bit for everything to settle down before returning.

Interviewer: and what's your relationship like with your family back home, do you keep close contact with them?

Interviewee: I, unfortunately, lost my mom, and it is the worse thing that could happen to someone while they are residing abroad.

Interviewer: may she rest in peace.

Interviewee: may god bless her soul.

Interviewee: I have two sisters and a close friend, we call regularly and share things, I maintain good relationships with my family and I visit.

Interviewer: Were they emotionally helpful when you made the move?

Interviewee: my mother may she rest in peace, she was the most supportive. She told me that if after I move and find out that I don't like living in the Czech Republic I will always have a place to go back to. We would call on Skype and I would talk to her and the family, that helped.

Interviewer: thank you so much, I am done with my questions, if the anything you'd like to share then please go ahead.

Interviewee: just like I told you, a piece of advice for people that will live here or will be raising their families here in Prague, before having children you must learn the basics of the language, in hospitals, even if they speak a little English, you will feel better if you speak a bit of the language, even if you don't

understand everything. When your child goes to kindergarten, you will integrate better with the moms, speaking a little Czech will even help your child in their integration process. I am against people that decide to have children in a country while they speak not one word of the language. Czechs are in their own country, we should be the ones that make the extra effort to learn the language, it will help anyone find a job, majority of the people that have issues here are the ones that speak no Czech, women sometimes need their husband to go with them everywhere, life right now is very difficult one person can't be doing everything. Czechs are not evil when you get to know them, even now when I go to my son's teacher and ask for simplifications she always obliges.

Interviewer: for you the key to integration is learning or at least getting acquainted with the language, since that opens a lot of doors.

Interviewee: exactly.

Interviewer: Okay, perfect. I just wanted to thank you again for your time today and thank you for providing me with an extra Interviewee.

Interviewee: you're very welcome, I am here to help. Please don't hesitate, I also think people can be weary and they don't always know the importance of research.

[End of Interview]

### **Salma**

Interviewer: What is your name and age? And your current occupation here in Prague?

Interviewee: My name is Salma, I am 31 years old. I am currently not working.

Interviewer: How did you decide to come to Prague? Did you leave Morocco?

Interviewee: No, we are an expat family. My husband is an expat. He does missions all over the world. We came here to work.

Interviewer: How long have you been living here?

Interviewer: 3 years.

Interviewer: Did you come from Morocco or another country?

Interviewee: We were in South Korea and we came here.

Interviewer: What was your first impression after coming here, did you have any ideas before the move?

Interviewee: We came during the lockdown. It was a bit difficult during the pandemic. But after that, it's okay.

Interviewer: How long was your lockdown?

Interviewee: We came in 2020, during the pandemic. It was a bit difficult, but afterward, it was better. We went through some hard times and some okay times. At some point school stopped so my son had to stay home, but it was okay. Most of the time we didn't stay in the country, we were on trips. We went to Turkey. The shops were open. But it's okay. We survived the pandemic.

Interviewer: When you came here, did you have an idea about the Czech culture? Or were you just accompanying your husband for his job?

Interviewee: I didn't think about it. I know that it's a European country. The culture is similar to other European places. Each country has its characteristics. But globally, I know that it's a European country. I already have an idea about the European countries. I have an idea about Europe because I live in other countries. It's okay. I don't think it's difficult to integrate. I've been living abroad for more than 10 years.

Interviewer: You can consider yourself an expat? You can move from one place to another.

Interviewee: Yes, you have to adapt.

Interviewer: When you move from one place to another with your husband and your son, do you think of a strategy to adapt? Or is it a ritual in your family? Do you think about it when you're in your new environment?

Interviewee: Before leaving a country, we do some research. Sometimes we visit the country before moving. For example, I have a vision of the country I want to move to. But we don't have a strategy.

Interviewer: It's just general research.

Interviewee: Yes, general research. Sometimes we go if it's a nearby destination. We can see what life is like there. We can visit.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the first week you lived in Prague after the lockdown? When you could go out and hang out with people. How did you find this place?

interviewee: I don't have direct contact with people here. I don't have direct contact with Czechs. I don't work. The only thing I have is my son's school. My son's school is French. There are more French people than Czech people. I know a few Czech women. But I don't have direct contact with them. We are not very close. We say hello and goodbye. I can't tell you that I have relations with the Czech people. Or that I have coffee with Czech friends. I have one Czech friend, she's married to a Frenchman, so their culture is more French than Czech.

Interviewer: So you only know these people because of your son's school.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Who are you surrounded by, apart from your husband and your son? People that you spend the most time with or people that you go out with? What's your circle like?

interviewee: I have friends here. I have an Algerian and an Egyptian. There's also a group of Moroccans here. We organize ourselves. We go out and do things among ourselves. And also French friends from the school.

Interviewer: and where did you come across this group of Arab expats?

Interviewee: they're not expats, they're long-term immigrants. They've been here for years. I met a Moroccan woman. She told me that there is a WhatsApp group. She added me to the group, and we meet sometimes.

Interviewer: This is the circle of friends you have.

Interviewee: Yes, that's it.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the challenges you face here? What difficulties did you face here with your family?

Interviewee: The difficulties? Honestly, Prague is a beautiful city, Czechia is a beautiful country with beautiful nature. It has many advantages. But it has disadvantages. I think that people here are not open. They don't accept foreigners easily. Especially old women. Especially older people. Young people are open to foreigners. Older people don't accept foreigners. Older people don't accept foreigners. This is a difficult thing for me. Especially when we were in Korea, a country where they try to help foreigners as much as they can. But here, they don't care. Whether you're struggling or not. Especially since I don't speak Czech. They don't care. They don't intervene.

Interviewer: What is your experience in a country where you don't speak the language? I don't know if you spoke Korean.

Interviewee: No, I don't.

Interviewer: So you lived the same experience in another country. What's it like not speaking the language?

Interviewee: It is different. I was in Germany before. But I didn't know German. You find someone who helps you. When you are alone, when you are in an obstacle, you find someone who helps you. I think that here, people don't care. That is the difference. They don't accept foreigners. They keep to themselves. Early on, at my son's school, and I have been here for 3 years. At first, I didn't know. I didn't have an idea why they closed off. But I tried, I would meet people and just say hello. They don't even answer. Sometimes, they don't even answer. For example, in the elevator, in the house, you meet someone, and you say hello but no answer. In other countries, we are not used to living like this. This is the only disadvantage. But I think that everything is fine. The country is beautiful. It's green and clean. The security is good. The public transport is good. You don't have to wait for long. The country is good.

Interviewer: This thing about Czech being closed off, did it make you hesitant, compared to when you lived in other new environments?

Interviewee: It's normal. You don't get an answer from the person in front of you. Sometimes I get to the cash register and I say hello but I don't get an answer. I am not generalising but especially older people. The younger generation is much more open. When you get to a cash register as a client, about to pay, you say hi and get no answer, you start to wonder. This never happened to me anywhere else, I lived in many countries but this never happened.

Interviewer: Have you ever been treated in a way that is not normal? Maybe you felt discriminated against?

Interviewee: Once, a neighbor had his dog while we were inside our car. He came to us. He wanted to play with us. In our culture, we Arabs don't like to touch dogs or be touched by dogs. And two years ago my son was 5 years old. He was scared and started screaming. The neighbor didn't like it. He said you are in a country where dogs are common, you have to get used to it, or else go back home. I had a family member with me, and she was wearing the veil, when he saw her, he started asking us where we live, and if we rent or own a house, he started asking us questions, and he called us terrorists because my family member was wearing the veil. He said you are terrorists. We said if we are terrorists, you are a racist and we're gonna call the police. It was his fault too. We were in our car and his dog came to us. It wasn't our fault. This is the only incident, and we meet him from time to time and always try to avoid him.

Interviewer: Apart from your friendship you mentioned with fellow Moroccans and Egyptians, etc. you mentioned you have some contact with Czech moms from your son's school. What are some of the other people that surround you, are you acquainted through your husband with some of his social circle? Maybe some other people that you meet every day?

Interviewee: Honestly, no.

Interviewer: And what is your relationship like with Morocco? With your friends that you left there, and your parents? Do you maintain regular contact?

Interviewee: Of course, We travel a lot to Morocco. We go back and forth. Every month and a half my son has two weeks of holidays. We travel to Morocco and also elsewhere. We keep in touch regularly. We speak Arabic at home. My son speaks Arabic very well.

Interviewer: Do you still have regular contact with your family? Do you still have a group of friends in Morocco?

Interviewee: Of course.

interviewer: Do you maintain regular contact?

Interviewee: It depends. We're all busy with our lives, children, and work. I can't be precise and say we talk every day or every week, but we speak regularly, and we meet in person once I go there.

Interviewer: Do you feel like your family and friend support helps you when you move from one place to another? Do you tell them about your moves?

Interviewee: My family, yes of course. When it comes to friends I am quite selective when it comes to whom I confide myself in. Some close ones, I of course talk to. I don't confide in all my friends, just the closest ones. With the rest I maintain contact, of course, we meet, we talk we laugh, and we visit each other.

Interviewer: Can we talk about the language barrier in Prague? How are you dealing with that? How did you experience the language barrier?

Interviewee: it's hard. I didn't understand anything. I only knew a few words, *děkuju*, and *Dobrý den*.

Interviewer: did you expect the language to be so different from everything we are used to like French or English?

Interviewee: Honestly, no. I didn't expect that. I knew that they had a different language. I lived in Germany before. I didn't understand German. I adapted to the country even if I didn't know the language.

Interviewer: Did you try to learn it? Or did you think that would be a waste of time?

Interviewee: No, not because it's a waste of time. If I was to live here for a long period let's say 10 years then I would know I have to learn the language. I didn't have to learn it. I knew that we would leave in a few years. It's useless to learn a language that you don't need. For example, English is everywhere. For French, many countries speak French. You can only use Czech here and maybe it would be similar to neighboring countries. But the people who live here, for example, the Moroccan group, they know Czech well. There are even Moroccans who are married to Czech husbands. They are obliged to learn.

Interviewer: Do you have an idea about how long you'll stay here in Prague

Interviewee: The mission is still here. But we are thinking of staying for one more year then we'll leave.

Interviewer: What does your husband's job consist of exactly, do you mind telling me? I am going to meet him in the future for the interview but still. What does the mission consist of exactly, does he work at the embassy?

Interviewee: No, not in the embassy. He is an inspector in Skoda. They built a nuclear power plant in England. And now they are building part of the nuclear power plant here in Skoda.

Interviewer: So if there is a problem he has to go there.

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: I don't know why I thought he worked at the embassy.

interviewee: Because most women here are married to men that work at the embassy. That's why.

Interviewer: You don't work. You don't need to work. Since you can't meet friends through your workplace, what did you swap it with? What do you do?

Interviewee: I take care of my family and my son. I don't do much. I can't tell you I have an occupation that I partake in every single day. I live day by day.

Interviewer: What are your plans for the future? Do you plan to leave after a year?

interviewee: God willing, that's what we think will happen.

Interviewer: Do you plan to leave because your husband will have other things to take care of for his job, or are you just done with Prague?

Interviewee: We like to change it up once a certain time passes. We've been here for three years.

Normally, we would stay for one or two years. I think that I need to change. I think it's better to change...

Than to fall into a routine. Now, it's a special case because my son goes to school and he integrated well.

He made friends and he loves his teachers. For him, we wanted to stay here as long as possible.

Interviewer: You said your child is five, correct?

Interviewee: He's almost seven.

Interviewer: Does he involve you by talking about his entourage at school?

Interviewee: Of course, he adores it there. My husband and I started bringing up the topic, that maybe one day we'll go to another country. And then he says well Mom, what about my friend, how are we going to do this? What about my friends, are they leaving too? He's very attached to his friends and his entourage at school.

Interviewer: Are his friends all French speakers?

Interviewee: Most of them yes, there are some Czechs, well one of the parents at least. But the majority are French or other nationalities.

Interviewer: What about family life? Do you spend time together? Do you do family activities with other expats or immigrants?

Interviewee: Of course. We go out together, we get organized. We go out to eat.

Interviewer: What kind of activities do you like to do with Moroccan or Arab immigrants?

Interviewee: In winter, there's not much to do. It's cold and snowy. If you go out, you can take a walk, or you can go skiing. Otherwise, not much to do. We don't understand the culture of skiing. We're Moroccan and very used to warmth and sun. So we just go out and drink coffee together. We take a walk. Or we take our children out to fun places, very regularly, so they meet each other outside of school. During summer, when the weather is warmer starting in May we go out a lot. That's all, a simple life.

Interviewer: You mentioned some women who have Czech husbands. Do you have any contact with the husbands, like an acquaintanceship?

Interviewee: No. No. It's superficial. I am acquainted with the Moroccan women I just don't know their husbands.

Interviewer: You mentioned wanting to relocate, for your husband's job. Do you have any other factors that could influence your decision?

Interviewee: The weather. It's very cold. We are not used to living in a cold country. Especially in January, February, and March. I don't have any other factors, apart from what I mentioned about them being closed off. Everything is excellent. The quality of life. It is much cheaper than in another country. If you have a good salary, you can live comfortably.

Interviewer: What do you want to tell another mother like yourself? One is going to leave Morocco and move to Prague. What would you tell her? What would you want to tell her? A young woman likes yourself.

Interviewee: I'd say prepare yourself for the cold. What else?

Interviewer: Advice so she would adapt better?

Interviewee: For her to go directly from Morocco to here. That would be a difficult situation. It's easier when you're already used to being separated from your family, you just have to get acquainted with the new environment. Any woman would have no problem adapting in that case, the most difficult thing is to snatch a woman from her family environment, and the Moroccan culture and put her in a strange country where she would have no family and no friends. It is not easy. For example, when we talk about France, Spain, and Italy. We are talking about a grouping of Morocco's biggest communities. And you feel that you are in Morocco. You go to a store to buy groceries and the cashier is Arab, you hear Arabic everywhere. There are Arabs everywhere. You are certainly not alienated in the sense of the word. I spent a long time in France and I know France. So, when you are in a country where the Moroccan community is small, it is difficult to adapt. As I said if you go directly from Morocco to the Czech Republic, it is

hard. But when you go from having lived abroad and you are used to being away from your family you will find that you only have to adapt to the country.

Interviewer: I think that reflects your personal experience, as you are constantly on the move and you lived in many other places. You're used to expecting a different culture when you relocate.

Interviewee: For example, in Korea, there was no Arab community. There was no Moroccan community. I knew that there was no Arab community. I knew that there was no Arab or Muslim culture. So, it is ok. When I came here it was not that big of a deal. There is an advantage here, for example, that Morocco is not far. But there are no direct flights. It is annoying to have layovers every time. It is tiring. Apparently, there was a direct flight before but they canceled it.

Interviewer: they canceled it when COVID started. There were direct flights to Casablanca and Marrakesh.

Interviewee: It's a shame

Interviewer: I want to ask you about this group of immigrants that you spend time with and that you are friends with. How do you come across them? Do you meet them through your husband or did you go on Facebook?

Interviewee: No, I didn't have to look. It was through my son's school.

Interviewer: Ah, were there Moroccan kids or Arab kids at your son's school as well?

Interviewee: There are not many Moroccans at the school, maybe not at all. But there are other nationalities, Egyptians, Algerians, and French. Regarding the group of Moroccan women I mentioned. I met this lady while she was playing with her son. She heard me talking to my son, she knew I was Moroccan and she was the one that introduced me to the Whatsapp group. She added me and honestly, it's great they speak every day they help each other if someone doesn't know about something, it's great.

Interviewer: Do you ever reflect on your identity as an expat that is constantly on the move, do you think about the changes that happen after you settle in a certain environment? Whether it would be Germany or Prague? Or do you feel like your chore is unwavering no matter where you live?

Interviewee: My identity does not change.

Interviewer: Maybe it is small changes then?

Interviewee: I am Moroccan in my essence. My son as well, we do not give up on our culture, whether it is cuisine or fashion, we maintain that at home. We take our culture with us wherever we go and our identity. Or else we would have changed after a short while, we would deviate, Unfortunately, this happens to a lot of people. Moroccans however, I think are less likely to forget about their roots and their culture. Some other nationalities deviate from their culture, they stop speaking their language. Sometimes they drink and smoke, they adopt an open mindset. We do not do that. In our home, Moroccan culture triumphs.

Interviewer: Do you not adopt even the small things from your new environment? It could be anything. Maybe trying their cuisine or trying their entertainment like Czech pastries or watching hockey? Do you not try to open up to the dominant culture that is surrounding you, when you go out?

Interviewee: Honestly, I think that if you speak the language, it will be easier for you to open up. For example, if you want to go to a Czech restaurant, there are more Vietnamese restaurants than Czech.

When you want to eat Czech food you find 4 or 5 restaurants that serve Vietnamese versus one that serves Czech. Like I said if I spoke the language I think I would be more open to the culture, in general. When we don't speak the language we just follow convenience and we avoid it. For example, when it comes to food, sometimes we have no idea what's in it, if there is alcohol or not, if there's porc or not, so we just take the easy road and avoid it altogether.

Interviewer: Many of the participants also mentioned struggling with food consumption because of religion and limited halal options, how have you dealt with that? Can you tell me a bit more about your and your family's experience?

Interviewee: When it comes to meat consumption?

Interviewer: It has more to do with religion and principles.

Interviewee: Well, of course. We're Muslim so we try to follow Islam as close as we can. But before, I wasn't eating meat unless we were at a Turkish restaurant or a certified halal place. After a while, I heard that Islamic scientists and fuqha say that as long as you're in a country of a nation that is mentioned in the coran you can eat it if you can't find options, not porc. We faced this issue when we spent some time in china. We really struggled, we were eating fastfoods all the time, and fish or sea food. We were looking for a solution, because we couldn't live on fastfood all the time. Here there's no fish, so what are we gonna eat? Frankly when I go out I eat chicken and meat, of course no pork. At home we cook the halal food we get from the butcher.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt a bit secluded or lonely after your many moves here, specially because you mentioned the family support as being extremely important?

Interviewee: Yes, it happens. As long as you're not in your homecountry, you feel alienated and you feel like a stranger. Even when you well integrated, you feel a bit...it's normal.

Interviewer: Since you live an expatriate life, maybe you're slowly getting used to it?

Interviewee: We are used to it by now, however life is ups and downs. It happens to me to feel demoralised or depressed and I sometimes even wonder to myself why did I come here?

Interviewer: Would you move back to live in Morocco with your family eventually?

Interviewee: We talk about it but nothing is for sure.

Interviewer: Will you return for your retirement?

Interviewee: That's for sure, Inchaallah.

Interviewer: I am done with my questions, if you would like to add something, an important anecdote or something you'd like me to know about your experience

Interviewee: I can't think of anything right now, if you have any more questions please go ahead.

Interviewer: I think I am done, perfect.

[End of Interview]

## **Mouna**

Interviewer: I'll Start by asking you to tell me your name, your age, and how long you've been in Prague. And if you don't mind, you can also add what you do for a living.

Interviewee: Okay, so my name is Mouna. I've been here in Prague for almost five years. In September it's going to be five years, so let's say four years for now. And I am almost 32 and my job now is sales engineer. That's what I do now.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the context of your move to the Czech Republic? How did you come to move to Prague?



Interviewee: Okay, so basically I never had a plan to move here. I did my studies after I left Morocco when I was 19, 20. I went to Spain and studied there. And then for some personal reasons, I moved to France for one year and a half. And after it, I had a scholarship to do my final thesis in Brazil. And I was almost finishing my studies and I had no plan. So I was just traveling as a backpacker in South America, around. And then I got a call from because I had this open to work in LinkedIn like I was just applying wherever. And I got a call from a company that told me they need someone for an internship, or apprenticeship for one year. And I had the interview and honestly, I didn't even know where Prague was. I had to Google it. I didn't even know if it was Europe, Schengen. I was like, just okay, I have no plan. And they passed the interview and they took my flight from Bolivia to Madrid and from Madrid to here and they started. And then after the internship, one year, yeah, if you want to ask.

Interviewer: Absolutely. So when you got the internship here in Prague, did you try to Google or did you try to do a little bit of research about what Prague is like and what the culture is like here? Or did you just jump into it and decide to?

Interviewee: I honestly just jumped into it. Like that time when I had no plan, like really like.

Interviewer: No expectation.

Interviewee: No expectation. Also my personal life, I was, I got married, and divorced. It was a bit like, yeah, okay. Now I have a life that I have to live alone because before I was with someone. And then, okay, I have a life to live alone. So it was pretty much open to anything. I would, I would like, if I say Google something like, I was like, okay, Prague is here. What is the language? What paperwork I would need to be there? The currency, life, like material, like, you know, survival mode, whatever I need. Because I was basically, I'm very independent of my parents, work, and pay for my study. So I was like, okay, I have a scholarship. It's ending. I need to survive. I'm not going back to Morocco under no condition. So this is how I came here. And it was, it was very hard. It was, I really struggled at the beginning.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you mind telling me a little bit about your struggles?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What, what was your, so you had no expectations when you got here? Did you, how, how did you experience your first week, first month here? Tell me, tell me about it. Interviewee: Everything was very beautiful, like really nice. Like, um, yeah, I arrived in September. The weather was like still good in mid-September. Yeah. It was everything like a fairy tale felt for me, especially coming from Spain. Yeah, I know. But this is like, you know, how it is like the architecture here. It's a bit like, uh, it's not like Spain or France or South America or the countries I traveled to. So it was a bit like a fairy tale. I really love the city the way it is, but then I struggled to find rent, to find a flat. And I faced a bit of a problem with language when I was looking for flats. They want someone who is Czech or who can speak Czech so they can communicate with the owner of the flat. And because of that, I think I arrived in 2018, mid of September. And I think there was the peak of Prague where many expats move in. And it was really hard to find a flat. Also, my budget was very low. So I had to live for almost three months in a hostel.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: With people in a shared room while doing my apprenticeship until I found something at the end. So I know I cannot like romanticize it. It was like blah, blah, blah. It was like being in survival mode for me. I think I started enjoying Prague. Maybe after I got the job at Exxon, like after the apprenticeship, after knowing that I have my employee card, I have my stability financially and like in paper terms. And there where I started, okay, I'm going to live here and I'm going to explore and I'm going to enjoy. But before that was fully for me stress, work-oriented, like money. I have to find my way. And yeah, and like

honestly, I didn't have any Czech friends. They were very not. Yeah. Yeah. It was like a bit hard to communicate with the Czech people. Also, I don't want to be very rude or anything, but you know that in Morocco, we are very open. Also in Spain, people are very nice and everyone is cheerful. You go to the supermarket and they're like, oh, Reina, mi amore, my love here. And here, if you just don't understand them, they start throwing stuff like, you know, like some stuff like some rude behavior that you face when you arrive. But yeah, but after that, honestly, yeah. After that, it was fine.

Interviewer: Okay, so where you had no expectations, you got here, you were in the survival mode. And after you settled, how did you like go about life?

Interviewee: It was good. Like I met people mostly from work. It's because when I came, it was the startup, the small company, the one that I started an apprenticeship. And basically, there were French people and Spanish. And we were like, it was a startup that basically took internships to do the whole work. And then, you know, so we were always like in a renewable mode. Even they told me I'm going to work with them. But there were people always going and coming. So I had most contact with those people from the apprenticeship from work, which were basically Spanish, and French. I didn't have any stable social relationships because everyone I knew that is going to leave and maybe even me if I don't find anything. But after that, when I was in Exxon Mobil, and they saw that I have the employee card and the stability, I start like to be more open to know people. And then when I had like my first Czech friend, Matej, who came to talk to me like I was just in the coffee and he came and we started to be friends. And like from the company, I started meeting friends from the company from where I was working. And then someone knows the other. And they're like where I created a little bit of a social life.

Interviewer: How would you describe your social circle right now?

Interviewee: It's very nice. Very.

Interviewer: Is it a mix of internationals? Is it Moroccans?

Interviewee: Moroccans, not anymore, because they told you like some of them left others. We lost contact. But most are expats and Czechs.

Interviewer: Expats, Americans, or just like all over?

Interviewee: I can tell you all the nationalities.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: Chile, Mexican, Portuguese, and Greece. Well, Czech, half American, half Czech. French, half French, half Moroccan. One guy, but he's I mean, his father is Moroccan, but he doesn't even speak. He's completely different. That's true. And I will say French from Bulgaria also. Russia. So very international. Yeah, it's a lot like now I remember people in my head and nationalities. Yeah, it's very, very, very international.

interviewer: And what would how would you describe your relationship with other Moroccan immigrants or expats here in Prague? When you had a relationship with them back in the day?

Interviewee: It was I would say it was more deep. Like we share more. We talk about things more like people, you know, that they understand you. With expats, like with my friends now, there are always those filters like this. Some stuff that you cannot talk about it or do not understand. Like we say just Ramadan. It was a bit like I get the same question asked one billion times. Like, can you join us for lunch? Could you like would you go out? Oh, you don't drink water. I will just, you know, you always get these questions and they don't understand some stuff. But like with the Moroccan was like more easy.

Interviewer: Why do you think it was easy? because...

Interviewee: You don't have to think much like it just like it just flows, you know, like. Since you share the same culture. Yeah, the same culture just flows, you know, just very easy with the friends I have now. Everything is great. I love them, but it's always this thinking this this consideration.

Interviewer: Did you have any culture shocks when you got here?

Interviewee: No, aside from people being rude.

Interviewer: That's the only culture shock you had?

Interviewee: Yeah, but honestly, like, as I told you, I was already like I saw a lot. I traveled. Yeah, I was in South America. I saw a lot.

Interviewer: Which countries did you live in before moving to Prague? Can you name them from the first one?

Interviewee: That I lived or yeah,

Interviewer: even traveled.

Interviewee: I traveled a lot, but I will say one that I lived. Seville, Toulouse, Nancy, Brasilia, and then Prague. I think that already when I moved to live in Brazil, that was the most cultural shock that I had in South America, especially I traveled to Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay. I think this was like that was like, OK, after this, I can take anything, for me just normal.

Interviewer: And you came to Prague and there were there was no culture shock because you were already acquainted with European culture, right?

Interviewee: Exactly. Yeah. It was for me. OK, you know, it's the same. I would say I noticed that they drink a lot of beer here and they eat a lot of pork, like in a really crazy amount compared to the other. Like I go to a restaurant to eat and there aren't many options. Yeah. And there's a lot of like, yeah, this mentality like no one says, oh, let's take a coffee or let's have a tea. It's not like in Spain was a bit like more this or France. But here it's like always it's all always about drinking. It's always about the beer, the pub, the bar. There's this culture like now I try like to spread it more with my friends, but there's not much this culture of brunch, of breakfast. They say, you know, in Spain, I used to go with my friends for breakfast, you know, for brunch like Sunday or something. You go for that as a social activity. Here it doesn't. You would go for that. Yeah, with the colleague or like with your close, close friend. But it's not like a very common activity, I would say.

Interviewer: All right. Did you have like a plan for adaptation when you got here? Because, you know, when you go to a new place and you and the culture is kind of different, usually people have some at least like some steps they want to take to adapt more. Did you have a plan or did you just wing it? What did you do to merge with the culture when you got here?

Interviewee: Honestly, I cannot say I did something to adapt. I have seen myself. I'm just like this is like I really respect them and they ask for respect and I do my thing and they do their thing. But I don't feel like I'm doing like an extra effort to adapt or like to merge. It's like you know, how we say in Morocco "be kind to me, I'll be kind to you" it's like me. I go out, I laugh, but if I don't want to eat pork or if I don't feel like drinking, I will no oblige just to be socially accepted, I do my life as, I don't do any effort. Maybe that's not good, but. No.

Interviewer: you don't feel the need to like do certain things because the majority of the people do them and they're Czech and you're in their country. So you still keep.

interviewee: the social pressure for me doesn't work like I can everyone knows me like I come and they say bullshit and it is like this with you. I think you already know this. I'll just say everything and that's it. Take it or leave it. But no, like I don't feel like this doing stuff just to be accepted kind of.

Interviewer: But you don't feel the pressure to be accepted. even if you plan to stay here for a long time?

Interviewee: Yes, I think I think the thing is maybe I'm lucky I don't feel that pressure because I'm very as a person like everyone is depressed somehow. We all have the dark side and you're not always 10 out of 10. But like if when I go out like when I am with people I am always laughing, I have always have good energy, blah, blah, blah, always talking about stuff. This is my personality, my character. So I think that no one cares like I don't need to do any extra for this already for them is something exotic to be that much like laughing and to have the energy

Interviewer: To have energy to have life?

Interviewee: Yeah, to have life, to be smiling the whole time they see or like to be cooking or doing stuff this for them, I think..

Interviewer: Have you made any Czech friends when you came to Prague? You mentioned you have one.

Interviewee: Yeah, after one year. Yeah, When I started at Exxon Mobil was like my first Czech friend. Yeah, Matej.

Interviewer: you have one Czech friend. That's it.

Interviewee: No, no, I know I have. I have many, but not many. But yeah, I have.

Interviewer: How can you describe your relationship with them? The locals.

Interviewee: the locals? Yeah. Well, one, I'm likely having something more than a friendship.

Interviewer: Yes. You mentioned that.

Interviewee: Yeah, like, but this guy that yeah, it's like mostly I would say like Matej, who is like Czech, the first guy I met three years ago. He's my friend, like my brother. And I would say he's my closest male friend in all of the people that I know. And he's Czech.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: We always make jokes about his culture and he made jokes about mine. He's very quiet. He's very different than what I am. He's like the prototype of, but he's very. I think after I met him and I met some Czech people, really, my..because at the beginning, the first year, also because I had a lot of things happening, I kind of hated this place. I was like, I hate it. I don't want to be here. But at the same time, I was stuck here because that was my survival. The one option that I have and I had, OK, this is what I have on the table. But after I met Matej and Christophe and Richard and a lot of people, Eva, a lot of people after, I felt like, oh, you know, these people are really it's not it's like in every country. There is and there is...And also in Morocco, I was like telling you, like there are some people bad and there is the good. It just yeah, I like honestly, yeah, I was quite surprised when I get the chance to know them very deeply and to know and I somehow I feel a bit bad for them, honestly, like because if you see that like Prague, it's like 70 or 60 percent expat and no one cares about Czech culture. No one cares about the Czech language like we sit at a table and there are Czech people and we can talk about Spanish culture, the Portuguese, Italian food, blah, blah, blah. And no one mentions them. It's like we are a kind of colonization. You know, we came here.. I kind of petty them, they are suppressed, we say Czech are cold, racist, this and that..and sometimes it's our fault, we don't give them a chance. If someone was rude to you in the supermarket, or someone treated you badly you're okay that's it, everyone is categorised as bad. Imagine you live in Morocco, in Rabat and 30 or 40 percent are Moroccan, and the rest are from senegal or...the way we treat them...

Interviewer: Well, so you have Czech friends. It's just like very few and they're very different in your opinion, from the rest of the Czech people.

Interviewee: yes, But I really respect them. I really respect them.

Interviewer: Yeah, of course.

Interviewee: And they see this...this thing, they feel that nobody cares about them nor their culture. People come here to work and form communities, like spanish communities...when you want to eat out, nobody says lets go to a Czech restaurant, you know.

Interviewer: And what's your relationship like with home, your parents?

Interviewee: it's limited, they don't know a lot about my life.

Interviewer: Do you call them? No?

Interviewee: sometimes yes, honestly..

Interviewer: Did you call your mom when you just moved here amidst all of the stress? Do you complain to her?

Interviewee: No, no. it's been a while now that my relationship with them is a bit..yeah.

Interviewer: Ah, okay. Do you go back to Morocco to visit family?

Interviewee: Yeah, I go once per year.

Interviewer: Every year?

Interviewee: Almost. I didn't get to go for two years because of COVID.

Interviewer: So, you still go see them.

Interviewee: Yes, but we don't have a close relationship. It's limited to hello, hi, everything is good, we never go into details.

Interviewer: let's talk about the language barriere, this is something that everyone complains about. How did you navigate the language barrier when you got to Czech republic, considering that you speak English, you speak French, you speak Spanish, you speak Darija, you even speak Arabic I am assuming. Do you speak Czech? Did try to learn the language, how did you navigate it?

Interviewee: I didn't, but I will have to because of my permanent residency, but basically with Google translate.

Interviewer: that's what you used?

Interviewee: yeah, Google translate or trying to explain myself. Because that's a thing you do when you travel a lot, and you're in many place, you have to find your way, for me the language was fine, and I ask someone if they speak english, if they can help me with this or that. I even have some friends and they help me with the administrative stuff.

Interviewer: You did not feel the need to learn?

Interviewee: I will now, just because I need it.

Interviewer: You need it for what? For your...can you explain please?

Interviewee: Yeah, for the permanent residency. Because here, after five years, we need permanent residency and they need to pass A2 in Czech.

Interviewer: So you will start to learn the language.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. And one thing I had, like talking about the language. When I arrived, like when I was doing my employee card, I remember I had to do it by myself because it was a startup. And they went to the MOI, the Ministry for the Renewal. And there was a woman and I was trying to communicate with her in English. And she knew she understood English. And she took my paper and she told me, how could you apply for a residency here and you don't even speak the language? And she gave me the paper back and she told me, this is not right. Go to the information and ask them. She could tell me what was wrong, but it was so rude. And she told me this and I remember it very, very, very well. There was also a moment where I was like, I hate this place. But I don't have a choice. But honestly, she's right. Like, reasonably, if you think she's right, but it wasn't how it was.

Interviewer: Well, I really can't give you my opinion right now during the interview. But I can't really give you my opinion right now. So do you think that, let's talk about your adaptation process here in Prague? Do you think even if you didn't try to learn the language when you came, you trying to get your permanent residency and learning the language for that is part of, do you think that's a part of your adaptation into where you live now?

Interviewer: I would lie if I say yes. Like I am here because, as I told you, I'm here because, okay, I think like this. I have a good job. I have good money, a good flat, and nice people around. That's good. That has nothing to do with Prague or the culture.

Interviewer: All right.

Interviewee: If you could move me in the same conditions and put me somewhere else, that would be okay. If you make it like magical, I would not need to suffer.

Interviewer: So you are very comfortable in your expat bubble or in your like surrounded by internationals. You have no need to have contact with the culture.

Interviewer: Exactly. Not even out of curiosity?

Interviewee: Out of curiosity. Yeah, I told you like later after having this friend, it's a bit like something going on. I'm like more interested in knowing his culture, like, especially in Moravia. And honestly, I think from all the expats here, I traveled a lot in the Czech Republic. I did a lot of hiking and camping and like small around, but it's not like I will not. That's different. Having this curiosity to know about the culture, it's everywhere. Like anywhere I am here and they can one day. Okay, what is the Republic of Dominica now? And they go on Google and they want to know your culture. But it's not I do it because I'm going to live here or it is a way to adapt to be here. I'm here because I have good living conditions. It's not because of the culture. Interviewer: Okay, but.

Interviewee: Because of the culture I can this is the thing we have here in Prague. You can create your own life, your own bubble and you can put people in and it's multinational somehow. And you know a bit from everywhere. But like I never went to the National Museum or like to something here.

Interviewer: All right. Well, fair enough.

Interviewee: And I'll be honest, maybe I'll be honest.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: Like the curiosity about the culture that I have is the same as a person who is going here for tourism. It's not a reason. Okay, I want to live here. I want to get involved in the culture and I know it. It's fine if I know something, but it's just a level of knowledge.

Interviewer: All right.

Interviewee: Because I also don't want to lose my identity as Moroccan.

Interviewer: Absolutely. So tell me a little bit. Tell me a little bit more about what you just said. You don't want to lose your identity.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's because like as a human being, as you said, like socially we want to be accepted, which I try as much as I can to protect myself from social pressure. So if I am OK, I start having Czech friends, like Czech romance, whatever. And then you were OK. Maybe I will need to do this just to prove that I am modern and open-minded. And I got involved in the culture. But by doing this, I'm stepping on something which is my own culture. For example, I'll give you just a small example.

Interviewee: Yes, go ahead.

Interviewer: Like last Saturday was the birthday of a friend and they were going to the park. But at the same time, it was Eid for me. And I had OK or I go like they were there like since 10 a.m. or something

like this. I was like, OK, or I go there like forget that it's Eid. And I would just be with them like it's a birthday and I'm there or I'm going to celebrate my Eid and wear like something nice. Moroccan.

Interviewer: Gondora?

Interviewee: Yeah, or like in this part, I had my morning with a friend who also does Eid. I was with Gondora and I went to the park for the whole day like this with my Gondora and with my stuff. Consider it funny, consider whatever you want. I don't care. It's Eid for me. And I was telling them that it's Eid and they were telling me happy Eid and stuff. And I'm trying to put my identity in a group of 25 or like 30 people and then just one. And I have Eid and it is an important day for me. So I wouldn't suppress this just to be accepted somewhere just to be OK. You know, they're not going to make fun of me or like what is Eid and what is religion and all the questions and the doubts. No, it is what it is. I do Ramadan. I am like this and this is Eid and I'm happy and I'm going to do it. Show it and like be happy with it as much as I can.

Interviewer: So you want to retain parts of your culture.

interviewee: Yeah, exactly. This is a small example.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewee: Like, yeah, I just don't want to. A lot of stuff like you. You are in this moment and you're like, OK, or that or that.

Interviewer: Do you find yourself conflicted with things like For example, when you can't decide what to do and what not to do? This is more like what I am and this is what I have to do to be with my friends, do you find it to be a problem when you think about what to do and what not to do? Do you think about it?

Interviewee: I told you that you stay with the idea of social and blah blah blah. People, they look weird at you and everything. But I don't care. It is how it is.

Interviewer: Can we talk about your social circle a bit more? We already talked about it.

Interviewee: Even in social circles, I would talk maybe the culture for us Moroccan. We have a culture and we have religion, for us they are intertwined you can't speak about culture without involving religion. But sometimes, just recently before Ramadan, maybe for two or three hours, I was speaking to this girl and she attacked me while I was talking about the religion of Islam and Ramadan and fasting and blah blah blah. And she gives me one thing and I give her one thing. I was defending it. I try to defend it. It's my religion. I don't know if I am perfect or not, but I have a religion. But there are strict rules like Ramadan or Eid. Except for that, I do whatever I want. But I don't want to make some doubts in my culture, in my religion. Or you say that in your country people do this or that, if people make mistakes they are human, it doesn't mean their wrong doings were dictated by their religion. You find a lot of conflicts like this. Either you get into the conflict with the person, or you accept and you tell them that you are open-minded and you don't care. You can play the open-minded person and detach from your culture.

Interviewer: for you detaching from your culture is an absolute no?

Interviewee: Yeah, just like about... I don't want to mention it. It's fine.

Interviewer: If you don't feel comfortable mentioning it, it's absolutely okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you use any... I don't know. A lot of people mentioned using apps. A lot of people mentioned going on Internations. Some websites. Because when you're new, you just want to meet people. You want to create your social circle. What did you do to meet people? Either Moroccans or foreigners. It doesn't matter.

Interviewee: I didn't do anything. I had Tinder for some time and Bumble. But same as I had it in Morocco, for the same reason, for dating. Like I told you all the people that I know are from work or from parties. I went to parties and met people.

Interviewer: What about work? Can we talk a little bit about work? You told me about your internship and the startup. And then you said you moved to ExxonMobil. How did you find work? Was it hard? Was it easy?

Interviewee: It was really hard. Especially because of the change of employer. But yeah, I found it.

Interviewer: How did you adapt? Did you make friends? Was it easy to adapt to your new job? Was it hard?

Interviewee: Even now, it is always easy because of the thing about corporate. When I moved to Exxon, it was corporate. Where I am now is corporate. It's very international. You are in an environment that everyone is trying to adapt. It's not like you are the only one. And to adapt to who? To what? There isn't one nation in that job. It's like an environment. You want to adapt to who? What is your reference or relative? If you work with 10 nationalities. I just go and as I told you, same as for friends. This is me. This is what I am. And I focus more on the job and what I have to do. To adapt. To know what is my job basically. And to maintain a really nice relationship. But honestly, one thing. People I work with directly, I am not friends with. I have always had this limit. I know I have people, friends from work. But they are different departments. The people that I work with directly in my team, I try to keep it for work and my friends are outside. They can be in the same company but not with my team.

Interviewer: So you said that it was hard to find a job. But you didn't really face any barriers when you started working.

Interviewee: No. Honestly, no.

Interviewer: You said there was a smooth sailing, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, a smooth sailing. But you also met a lot of people that ended up being your friends. Like Al-Arabi for example.

Interviewee: Yeah, Al-Arabi, he was my manager. And we weren't friends when he was my manager. We became friends when I changed the department to engineering because I was with him in customer service. And after I changed to another department, which is like basically two separate buildings. Then we became friends after. Do you often... It was very helpful because he was Moroccan.

Interviewer: Yeah, he was one of your close Moroccan friends after you changed departments.

Interviewee: Yeah, and also when he was a manager, he was very helpful. I would compare it to another manager because I had managers after him. And he was really helpful. He was really nice to me.

Interviewer: Do you think because it was very easy to communicate with him?

Interviewee: I think so. I remember even I had the first meeting with him. We weren't friends when he was my manager. We weren't friends. We were just like a manager and a colleague, like a worker. But still, in this process, he was very nice. Like even since day one, he was speaking to me in Moroccan. And he gave me like poof. Like this is what is Czech. This is what is working here. This is what you could expect. This is what is not. Like he just opened my eyes, you know. He removed this la vie en rose or whatever people say around. Blah, blah, showing off. He was like, oof, this is reality. It was very helpful. He even helped me how to move from the customer service to the engineering department, which was very difficult there. But he gave me some tips that like, you know, in a friendly, indirect way that a manager wouldn't give you. So you can push it and get where you want.

Interviewer: Okay. I think because he was Moroccan. He was even like when stuff like this, we were talking in Moroccan, not even in English. So in meetings.



Interviewer: That's cool. Do you still keep in contact with him?

Interviewee: Yeah, of course.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: that's Great. So I was going to ask you if you reflect on your journey here in Prague because you've been here for some time now. Do you reflect on how you evolved as a person when you came here till now? Or how did you, like, I don't know, how did you adapt to your new environment? It's a lot because staying here for almost, you said, for almost five years. Interviewee: Yeah. Honestly, yeah, it is true that I'm here like that much. But as my work was remote before, so I was traveling. Like, for example, last year was five months living in the Canary Islands with my laptop working in different Spanish environments. And I just left Prague because I was like, okay, I need change. The year, like even in COVID, I had like almost three months. I was between Turkey and Albania traveling. Like I travel a lot. Like I'm here and sometimes I'm not. Morocco when I go, I stay for two months. So, yeah, I don't know how to answer this, but it has nothing to do with Prague, just my life going. Like, you know, I don't know if I evolve, I change, I grow old, you know. You meet people, you learn lessons, you know what you don't want. Especially what you don't want, you cannot accept and you just, yeah, go. But sometimes I get sick of here.

Interviewer: You do? Why?

Interviewee: I just get like sick. It's a bit, I don't know, maybe it's me, but it's just like, yeah, as I told you before, like this and they go five months, two months somewhere and they need some change. Maybe it's because of the routine, like, you know, same people.

Interviewer: You want to break the routine.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think it's something that, yeah. And also the curiosity to travel around, to visit around, to discover other cultures.

Interviewer: And what about your future? Do you feel like you're going to stay here for a long time? Do you have plans to stay here for a long time or do you have plans to move around? Do you see Prague as just a transit country?

Interviewee: It was, It was. It was a transit after I got this job, which is very stable. God willing, it will be stable. If I continue and I pass the probation period, I think I will be here, I will be here like at least, I don't know. I have no plan. Like..

Interviewer: You don't have a plan.

Interviewee: My plan now, my plan was to find something like this where I am now.

Interviewer: Career-wise, right?

Interviewee: Career-wise, like it's not like career-wise, but salary-wise. Like who pays me more, I go. And like at the end, we all do the job from eight to five it's the same. So this is where I was. Okay, this is the life I want. This is the time I'm going to give to the job. And this is the money that I wanted back. And I want a remote job. So when I have this, okay, I'm sick here, I can move wherever I am. So yeah, and I got it. So now I don't have any plans, honestly, but I'm not thinking to leave unless I find something, wow, so much better that's worth, but I'm not looking.

Interviewer: All right, so the only way you would leave Prague is if you had a better career proposal in another country.

Interviewee: Exactly, because honestly, Prague as a country and Czech Republic aside, like it's still better than France. I was in France, French people are so racist. Like, oh, okay, Czech Republic.

Interviewer: But Czechs are racist, but a bit less?

Interviewer: Less, no, very much less, believe me, Moroccan in France. The thing about the Czech Republic, they are rude. I don't say racist, I just said rude at the beginning. But Czech people are like not all of them, since like I know now people and some of them are rude, but they are rude to everyone. Doesn't matter your nationality. You go to France, if you are Algerian, Tunisian, or Moroccan, you're going to be bullied as... It's like, yeah, honestly, yeah, I mean, here Moroccan, you can say to people Moroccan, they're like, wow, Morocco, it's like it's something very exotic. Like what I was missing here was the salary. Now I think I got like, I see myself and the career path. Now I have something that meets my expectations. So I'm not thinking to move.

Interviewer: All right, fair enough.

Interviewee: There isn't something perfect. There is no country that is perfect, even Morocco. You have always like to let go of some stuff, except some plus and minus. Do you have any other questions?

Interviewer: I do, I do. So I was going to ask you, like, so this is clear to me now that the only factor that could influence your move is salary-wise, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, and if it is like really too much, like, I don't know. It's like if I'm going to be, yeah, I'm not France, France, even if you give me 20 million per month, France, I'm very traumatized from France. Not traumatized, but it's not a country, no, France, no. But I would say maybe Germany, maybe Switzerland, maybe Spain, Portugal, Italy. But yeah, but with like really better conditions. Like even if I get the same conditions, I'm not going to move.

Interviewer: All right, well, the most important question, like to me, this is a really fun question to ask my participants. If you were to meet a Moroccan that would move here to Prague, what would you say to prepare them or what advice would you give them if they were planning to move here and like actually live here for a long time? What would you say to them for them to adapt better?

Interviewee: I'm not going to say anything. I would just tell them, don't listen to people, people bullshit. Everyone shows up, everyone says whatever they say and just go and yeah, just be optimistic and discover by yourself because my experience or other people's experience is never the same. You can tell me all startups are good, but from my experience it was bad, so you never know. Corporates are bad, you never know. I get to know friends there, but for some people, they get stressed there. So for me, I would never say no or I'm not going to say anything. I would just say the only advice, is don't listen to people and don't, and like this is the reality. I can like if we talk about work, I would tell them this is what I know and don't listen even to me, you know, just go and discover things by yourself because like nowadays everyone just pushes you down, you know, you tell them I get this job and it's blah, blah, and it's not my career. This is impossible. This doesn't exist in Prague. You cannot have this. It's impossible and you have it, you know, it's just like everyone takes you down. It's not because they want something bad for you, but just the mentality like nowadays how people are is like, or they show off, they give you some expectation that they doesn't exist or they take you down. So I would say just don't listen to anyone. Go have fun. All right. Enjoy life a bit.

Interviewer: Okay, what about advice relating to the culture? If someone is trying to like get into the culture a bit more, try to adapt to the majority society, what would you say to them?

Interviewee: I would say the same as I told you before. Like I really feel sometimes bad for Czech Republic, how the culture is like very, like very ignored and that there is some of them are rude, but it's like in every country, nothing's perfect. But if you get to know them, there is really nice people around. And yeah, if you want to learn the culture, if you feel like attracted to the language, go for it. It's nice. I mean, yeah, nothing is perfect at the end of the day. But it's nice. It's very safe here, honestly.

Interviewer: Yeah, you do like the safety.

Interviewee: Safety here, I never got anywhere. Safe here, like I come home, 4 or 3 a.m. Like no one ever, no one. Even people in the tram, they talk to me, but it's funny. Like, yeah, the other day was like just 3 a.m. I was going back home and there was a woman, she was so drunk and she was looking at me and she told me, oh, I like your hair, your hair is beautiful. I'm like, okay, thank you. Just get compliments. So yeah, I think very safe, yeah.

Interviewer: I don't have any more questions. But if you have anything that we didn't talk about, like that you would like to mention that you think is important for you personally or like your experience here in Prague, go ahead.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: If you don't think of anything, then I'll just end the interview here.

Interviewee: Yeah, I would like honestly just, I don't know like what other Moroccan people said or anything. I think just like I'm not giving up my identity for others. Like for like, there's some stuff that I gave up for it because I want to, but not to be socially accepted in a culture. But at the same time, I respect a lot of the other cultures. Like I wouldn't, yeah, there's some, I go back and say there's some Czech that they are rude, but still, there are really nice people here and we shouldn't be that very judgy to them and Czechs. Yeah, because I used to, I used to be, but at some point it was like, okay, it's their identity, like communism, the history. If you go back, this is how they are. This is how they were raised. I don't want to give up my identity. They don't want to. So imagine if I was also in Morocco and I have 70% from Senegal and from Tunisia and everyone like really hard to find the Moroccan in the street. You will feel like, okay, where am I? Is this my country or I'm where? So they're also a bit tired of us, of the...

Interviewer: of the expats?

Interviewee: Like just us, for example, sometimes you get this when you go to the center and you're like, I'm so tired. There are a lot of tourists around. Yeah. Same when we are tired of the tourists and they are tired of the expats. We come here, we take over the jobs. We ignore their culture and yeah, we want it easy. We want people to be nice. We want it all. So yeah, we should like be a bit like sometimes try to put ourselves in the others shoes and to be a bit more, more open. Like I'm telling you, like if I'm interested, I'm here because of, I'm very honest. I'm here because of life conditions that, and some people say, Oh, I love their culture. That's why. But I'm not saying that it's bad culture. You just like, we like some stuff. We don't like it. Depends. We have curiosity for some stuff, other stuff. We don't have curiosity, but it's my personal perspective. It doesn't mean the culture is bad. No, it just didn't click with me. I don't feel that interest or curiosity, but maybe the culture is perfect for someone else. So that's why I told you when someone comes, I will tell them, just go and experience yourself because maybe it will be completely different. Different for you. Yeah.

Interviewer: All right.

Interviewee: So yeah.

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much.

Interviewee: You're welcome.

[Tape Paused]

## **Alarbi**

Interviewer: Okay, so I usually start by asking my participants about their age, their occupation, their name, and how long they lived in Prague.

Interviewee: Yeah, so the age is 32. My occupation is sales and marketing for Exxon Mobile North Africa and the Indian subcontinent. Been in the country for approximately 5 years now.

Interviewer: 5 years, okay. Can you tell me a little bit about how you came to move to Prague in the first place?

Interviewee: So, I finished school in 2017, January.

Interviewer: In Morocco?

Interviewee: No, in Turkey.

Interviewer: In Turkey?

Interviewee: Yes, so I finished my...

Interviewer: Sorry, I'm going to stop you. So, before moving to Prague, you were not living long-term in Morocco?

Interviewee: No, in Morocco until 19, and then I got my bachelor's degree program or scholarship to Turkey.

Interviewer: To Turkey?

Interviewee: Yeah, where I got my school. There, the moment I finished was... It took me 5 years because I had to go through one year of language in Turkey, language program. And then, yeah, I remember it was December 2016, I got the interview the first week of December and then I got the acceptance in the second week of January. So, after I got my degree, I went to Morocco and then they helped me through the immigration.

Interviewer: Okay, so you moved to Prague for a work opportunity?

Interviewee: For work opportunities, yes.

Interviewer: And you stayed with the same company for the whole 5 years?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you do some research before moving here or was your move just like connected to the work?

Interviewee: Just connected to the work.

Interviewer: So, what were your first impressions of Prague when you got here? Tell me a little bit about like the first week. How did you find a home? How did you like managing transportation, shopping, and everything?

Interviewee: So, it was a, you know, funny thing. Of course, when you had to come here, you had to find somebody where you can stay until you find apartments, right? So, I was lucky enough that my girlfriend was already here. So, when I moved, we already had an apartment. She had an apartment, so I moved in quickly, right?

Interviewer: What's her nationality?

interviewee: She's Slovak.

Interviewer: She's Slovak, okay.

Interviewee: So, she was working here before I joined, like 3 years before I joined. So, she started in 2015. Yeah, 2015, 2016. That was 3 years. And then in 2017, I joined. Yeah, so I came directly to her, so I did not have the challenge of finding a place where to crash and all that.

Interviewer: So, you already had like a support system for your house?

Interviewee: Exactly, yeah. So, it was already established. The housing was the biggest challenge and I would say the biggest challenge that people find first thing they move here.

Interviewer: It's very hard, yeah.

Interviewee: Especially if you are moving from non-European countries, yeah? But I believe that that has a solution because I assume or I think that there are already agencies that give the kind of a quick housing certificate or maybe housing paper for new immigrants.

interviewer: Yeah, agencies that help you find housing. Some of my participants found their apartments through that.

Interviewee: Exactly, so that is a problem-solving item. But if I would speak of the first week, to be honest, it was different than the places where I lived. So, living in Morocco, I lived in kenitra, not the city but outside the city. For the majority of my life I lived in rural areas, so more agriculture, the forest around, and more of village type of living.

Interviewer: Very quiet.

Interviewee: Exactly. And then moving to Turkey to a very small little town where everything is far away from you. Meaning, if I assume going to the airport it's gonna take me 8 hours, going to a Big city it's gonna take me... Also...

Interviewer: You did not move to the capital, right?

interviewee: No, it was a very small little town. And then afterward, I lived for a couple of months in Istanbul, the traffic..was kind of a metropolitan city. But if I would compare the places where I've lived so far, to me, Prague is the best. Because it's not small big, I'll call it small big, right? But with the transportation system, you can get anywhere.

Interviewer: You can get anywhere.

Interviewee: You know, in a very quick manner, with good timing. And then it's a bit of a diverse country, so you don't feel alone. You don't feel excluded, right? So that's why I'm here.

Interviewer: So apart from your girlfriend, which was Slovak, which actually gives you a big advantage, right? Because she speaks the language. I'm assuming she helped you with a lot of things.

Interviewee: Of course, I mean, that's true, that's for real. But in terms of papers and documentation and company stuff, they were already having kind of an agency that takes care of all documents. That agency, even 6 months or 8 months before your passport expiration, they send you an email and then they call you, Hey, your passport is going to expire. So in that sense of bureaucracy with the countries, officials and all that, you know, the company will...

Interviewer: They have you covered.

Interviewee: Yeah, they have me covered a hundred percent. But in terms of living, of course, I mean...

Interviewer: I see. So apart from being hosted by your girlfriend, which made it easier, obviously, did you have any culture shocks? Like something that really shocked you that was very different from where you came from?

Interviewee: Why I say particularly no, because since I was 19 I was out, so I've met too many different people, too many different cultures. So for me, it was a kind of normal habit, a normal routine. Wherever you go, you easily blend.

Interviewer: So what did you do to blend?

Interviewee: Say again?

interviewer: What did you do to blend?

Interviewee: Hang out with more people from work, that lead you to get to know other people outside work, which is the healthiest part, by the way. And then learning about activities, what you can do as an activity in the city. Like I've mentioned, you go to the gym, you go to tennis, you go golf, or I don't know, walking or hiking. By the way, we have two dogs, so with that, you go explore more outside parks. And then you get to know more people in the park, so you build up your animal friends. not animal friends, but friends through animals.

Interviewer: People who have animals, yeah. So you socialized a lot with people from work, which were mostly expats like yourself.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Alright. Did you consider yourself an expat or more of like an immigrant?

Interviewee: I never thought of that.

Interviewer: You never thought of it? Because a lot of people I interviewed are very like, oh, I consider myself this or I consider myself that.

Interviewee: Wow. I'm not going to lie to you. Neither of them.

Interviewer: You don't?

interviewee: No. Do you know why? Because if I would say an expat, then I would have a date when I'm planning to leave. And if I would say an immigrant, I would have already a feeling from society saying that makes me feel like an immigrant. And I had neither thought of both. At least this is the way how I define both, right?

Interviewer: You think about it that way.

Interviewee: You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah. So I'm not sure if I would fit in the bucket if you have a bucket.

I do, I do. I have to because I have to put people in categories, but this is also upgrading.

Interviewee: That's funny. How can I? So looking at the reality of where I am at now, so I would say an expat because I left the country, right? But as a feeling, personally.

Interviewer: But look at you, you're here now.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You've returned, so maybe as a tourist, but still.

Interviewee: No, but we always think that this is home, at least for me, when I'm coming, when I came back now, I feel like, I'm breathing.

Interviewer: Yeah, you miss Prague.

Interviewee: You know what I mean? So for me, that feels like more of an honest feeling.

Interviewer: Well, okay, that sounds great. You adapted through like your work friends. Did you face any challenges? Like anything that was a bit hard to get over or something that you were missing from the previous place, you moved from?

Interviewee: The sun.

Interviewer: The sun.

Interviewee: Okay, so it was more like that. So I loved Prague most within the summer period. Most probably I did not discover Czech Republic overall in the winter period because of COVID, which took three years. Right. So two years in the country just to adapt, just to get yourself into the level. Okay, now you know what, what is what. But the year when I decided to discover what the country has, COVID came and that was everything. So COVID helped as well contributing to not knowing the Czech Republic for the winter period, which I believe that's where, you know, it's known for. Skiing, resorts, getting lost in mountains, hiking, and all that. So that's the beautiful part about it as well in winter. But for me, I enjoy more sun. Yeah. So maybe that's the weather. But people wise very cool, very fun. Plenty of friends. Yeah, I never found any challenges with people.

Interviewer: Do you have any Czech friends?

lkb Yes, I do. I have even my best friend, his name is Matěj.

Interviewer: Okay, did you meet him through work?

Interviewee: Through work, yes, through work.

Interviewer: Did you find it hard to crack the Czech bubble? Like maybe like get close to the locals?

Interviewee: We all have to accept the fact that like every, I'm not going to call them nationality, but every region that exists in the world, they have a people profile, right? So even if we take our own country, if you go more to the South, you find more conservative people, more in the middle, more open-minded, more north, European mentality, right? So similar to here. Maybe you may say it's hard to crack. Maybe they open up the moment they go to *Pivular* to drink. And then they became very friendly the way that we found our Mediterranean friends, right? You know what I mean? So it's just a different profile. I would not label it as close or open, but I would think of it in a way that, okay, it's like if you are having a problem-solving mindset, you are always like, hmm, I need to crack that puzzle. You know what I mean? So I actually have friends that like they are silent all day. The moment they have a beer, then they are the funniest people in the world.

Interviewer: But if you don't drink, you can't get to that point.

Interviewee: I'm not drinking. This is my, honestly, I never drunk.

Interviewer: You don't drink alcohol.

Interviewee: I never drunk.

Interviewer: But you, okay, so this is very interesting to me. You don't drink alcohol, but you, I'm assuming because of religion or just because you don't like it.

Interviewee: I never had the self, I never found it convincing for me to drink.

Interviewer: All right, so you don't think there's any reason to drink. But you know, a lot of people I talked to, a lot of people, and they told me that they actually do it. They like to hang out with friends, although they don't drink. But once the people start drinking, they just don't find a point in the conversation. Or people don't even get to know the locals because the locals want to drink and the others don't want to drink. So like it's a whole bunch of scenarios.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you participate in the social activity without actually drinking.

Interviewee: Because if you would stick to, that's funny because if you would stick to the mentality of, not the mentality but the life routine that you have. Myself in that rural area or myself in a small city in Turkey or metropolitan Istanbul or, you know, you need to find that balance or to have that equation fixed to blend in as a society. So you cannot bring the kenitra formula and apply it to Prague, you know what I mean.

Interviewer: So you knew that you have to do this to integrate?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Because if you...

Interviewee: Because they, yeah, so to crack them or to be with them, they by default, like for example, if you are with your Czech friends, okay, what's your plan? I'm going to hang out with friends. Would you like to join? Okay, let's go. I join, but knowing that is it going to be a people party, is it going to be a club, is it going to be a coffee, is it going to be a park, is it going to be, you know, you know what I mean. So of course you may ask, okay, where to, how, and that you may have that sort of stuff, you may not be interested. So being flexible as well and going with the wave with whatever situation that you have, I think it helped me as well too.

Interviewer: So being flexible is always one of your, like, strategies or one of your...

Interviewee: So you can always have the principles, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewee: No one can break them for you if you know what you're doing, right? But at the same time, you have that borderline. I mean, if you see people via the ultimates, you would have to think, is this on

purpose? Do they know? Don't know? You know, so a funny story. So one of my clients that I started working with since last year, June, no, actually I've been working with him for a year, but since I moved to Dubai, I got to hang out with him, go out for dinners, go and spend some time outside. Part of relationship building and all that. Yeah, so we went to this restaurant and then I ordered steak. He ordered a salad. Done talking, speaking, and eating, without noticing what he ordered. I was thinking, like, he's going to have a main course. And I said, aren't you going to plan to have your meal? He said, no, this is my meal. And then I said, oh. I was thinking, because salad is light. And then some diet. He said, no, I don't eat meat. I don't eat anything that is just out of animals. I never knew that. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Oh, you didn't know that about your client?

Interviewee: No, I did not know that, because that's how you discover, once you have taste of it, and you discover, then you learn, right? So from there, I had a thought. I felt a little bit of guilt. Not, I mean, eating meat in front of him. Despite the fact that it was for him kind of prohibited. Like, you know, it's like us eating pork or drinking or whatever, based on religion. And actually, I asked him, like, sorry, I didn't know. Is it bothering you? He said, no, it's like for you being in a place where people drink. Then I had this self-reflection that despite the fact that many people may be having this sensitivity like I said, that is borderline. You know what I mean? Without knowing, liberating, not knowing, then that's fine. But for some other people, that will be big effects. Oh no, how come? You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, I do.

Interviewee: So having that flexibility in filtering the situation based on where you are, who you are, that helps you as well. Not everybody has it. Some people will say, okay, let's go outside. Where to? But, oh no, no, no, I can't go out. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah, I think it's a healthy approach. I mean, it doesn't really matter what I think, but I would say it's a healthy approach to adapting to any new environment.

Interviewee: And no judgments. Yeah. No judgments.

Interviewer: Did you think about adaptation as like a concept for you when you moved here?

lkb Definitely not.

Interviewer: It just, everything happened organically.

Interviewee: Yeah, organically.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever feel out of place? Like, did you ever face any discrimination or...

Interviewee: No. No.

Interviewer: And can we talk a little bit about your social network when you lived here? Because you lived here for five years, which is a long time. Compared to my other Interviewees, some were here for 22 years.

Interviewee: Wow, 22, that's...

Interviewer: Yeah, but can you talk to me a little bit about your close friend groups? Or maybe the people that you felt like gave you support while you were here. Apart from your girlfriend, I'm assuming that's like the most important part.

Interviewee: So... You know, being social, it's hard to identify a bucket of group of people around you. I can name a few, but it will be unfair for the rest, which is okay. Yeah, so the close friends, of course you tend to have close friends from your own nationality because that's the easy blend, right?

Interviewer: Oh yeah, did you have close friends that are Moroccan?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of them?



Interviewee: Yeah, of course. So, Mouna was one of them, then Hajar, she left to the Netherlands. Then I have Zakaria, who's sitting next to me over here in Prague. Then I have Zineb, but she moved to Switzerland. Who else. And then, of course, the Czech friend, he felt like more of a Moroccan than Czech, because of his character. Very special, very unique.

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Interviewee: Because he has a different profile than standard Czechs.

Interviewer: So what's a standard Czech?

Interviewee: Because he had his girlfriend from Morocco, so he knew how...

Interviewer: Oh, he was dating a Moroccan.

Interviewee: Yeah, he was dating a Moroccan, so he had that vibe. So that was an easy click.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what a standard Czech is? Just like trying to define it.

Interviewee: A standard Czech would be a small conversation. They might be interested in a short dialogue. It requires more effort from you to approach. But the moment they receive, OK, you care, you are interested in friendship, then they start inviting, then they start extending the dialogue or the presence outside work, for example, outside wherever you meet. That's for me the standard Czech. For example, you may meet somebody at an event, the second Czech after drinking.

Interviewer: They are a bit more open.

Interviewee: And then that remains that profile, they are always like that, right? But the more time you spend with them, then you know their personalities. Then you meet Czechs over coffee. You go for coffee, then you start a small conversation with people like that as well. Funny thing, when I was in the Netherlands, I was just exploring the town, you know, the old Amsterdam, these houses and all that. Then you went for a coffee, and then let's grab a coffee, and then a lady came beside me, and she sat as well beside me. And then we had a small conversation. It wasn't easy. For me it was not a big effort, I used to do it here. So that gave me kind of additional information on how difficult it is to crack.

Interviewer: To crack Czechs. As comparing it to a Dutch person.

Interviewee: To a Dutch person.

Interviewer: I see, that's very interesting.

Interviewee: And again, if you are in France, for example, I'm not going to speak, I mean, Paris is no way that you speak, I mean, you speak with French people, right?

Interviewer: But there are so many nationalities.

Interviewee: So many nationalities that you cannot even define. So here it would be that, when you go to any social place, you find plenty of foreigners as well, like you, and they are coming to explore.

Interviewer: That makes you comfortable, right? Having like a big bubble of foreigners like yourself.

Interviewee: Yeah, you find them around.

Interviewer: Why did you feel that way? Did you feel that way because it was people going through the same experience as you?

Interviewee: Never never thought of what the others are having or what the others are living or going through. Of course. Going through in a good way, not in a trouble-shooting. Yeah. Because that will automatically require you to interfere to help to extend your... So, no. Because I've lived it like for five years, six years in Turkey. And I've never experienced it like that. No. Because I've lived it like for five years, six years in Turkey. So I had too many experiences that build you a character that is easy to blend. Just think of... I'm not sure about how well I would... There is something called a statistical model, right? A chain, right? So, whenever you have the... How can I call it? A logical chain, you put it in and it adapts automatically. I would frame myself like that.

Interviewer: That's how you see yourself?

Interviewee: You know what I mean? So, not having too many variables, too many challenges.

Interviewer: Is that from your job? Is that what you do?

Interviewee: Say again?

Interviewer: The chain, the example that you just gave, is it from your job?

Interviewee: Yes, something like that. Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Can you talk a little bit about the language barrier? How did you navigate? Because I don't know if you spoke Czech before coming here.

Interviewee: Nope. I don't speak Czech by the way.

Interviewer: You still don't speak Czech?

Interviewee: I don't speak Czech.

Interviewer: So, when you came here and you noticed that it's a very different language from ours, it's even different from our second and third language. It's not like French, it's not like English. How did you navigate that? Did you try to learn? Did you try to pick up phrases?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely pick up phrases. You pick up key phrases, like small introduction about yourself. For example, if you go to a shop, what do you like to have? So, these are survival sentences, right?

Interviewer: Survival sentences?

Interviewee: Yeah, survival sentences.

Interviewer: Beautiful.

Interviewee: I call it like the language survival sentence. That's your being in a community.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It's interesting.

Interviewee: Communication.

Interviewer: But I guess your job was English-speaking anyway, so...

Interviewee: Yeah, no, this is one of the good and bad things. The bad thing is that you don't spend so much of your energy and time on not learning the language and that's something that contributes... contributes huge... I mean, contributes to learning the language or the new language, whatever. But English consumes most of your time, the energy going to work. After work, you're just looking for something to relax. So, that is why I came to know many experienced people, you know, and say, okay, look, study until you finish studying, then work. Once you work and then you want to go back to study, it's going to be difficult. That's what I think. At least for me, it's a true valid statement. Because I spend the majority of my energy on work, trying to do my best in it, right? And then at the same time, not to leave space where you're brain is going to be performing well. And by doing that, I did not have enough energy to contribute. Either learning the language or going for a master's degree or, I don't know, doing some intellectual learning where I would be studying three hours or two hours extra to learn. So, that affected me a little bit. It affected language learning.

Interviewer: So, you never took any courses, right?

Interviewee: I did.

Interviewer: You did?

Interviewee: I did. So, the company provides the... The company provides language courses. They provide more than eight, nine languages. So, if I still remember, Czech was one of them. Then you have, of course, Arabic, French, English, for professionals, anything. Even if you are, you know, speaking English.

Interviewer: Even if you're fluent, you still learn more.

Interviewee: yeah. Exactly. More for professionals. Swedish, Spanish, Italian. So, they provided plenty of languages. So, I took Czech, of course, by default. Yeah, I took it for three months. I passed the exams and all that. But because my attendance was low, they told me, you cannot continue because your attendance was low.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: And why is that? Because you have two things. Either you have morning classes or evening classes. So, morning classes start at seven, finish at nine or eight thirty-ish, like three times a week. And then in the evening, that would be starting from six to seven-thirty. So, I was taking the evening classes. And after work, sometimes I was eating more from work, going, you know, I was working after six. But I was finishing earlier than six, so I thought, okay, I need to go and have rest. And I was missing classes.

Interviewer: So, it was not a balance with like the stress from work was just overtaking and you wanted your time off to recharge. I see. But you said you passed the A2 level, right? So, you do have some knowledge of Czech.

Interviewee: No, so those three months that I had was like basic. I don't even remember what I studied. I'm not going to lie to you.

Interviewer: But you still took the government test and you passed it, right?

Interviewee: Government? No, no, there was no government test.

Interviewer: Oh, because you said you have permanent residency here.

interviewee: I have permanent residency in Slovakia. Here is a temporary residency. And I believe for the permanent residency, you just need to know very few basics, maybe A2 or A1.

Interviewer: It's my bad

Interviewee: it's okay, because my neighbor, he's American-Vietnamese. His wife is Czech. And he has permanent residency here. And I told him how was it. He said like it was a normal conversation. Like, hey, how are you? How was your day? My name is this. I'm say 40 years old. I have a son. Yeah.

Depending on the official. Yeah, yeah, some official. Some officials know.

Interviewer: They want to actually test you.

Interviewee: Yeah, they want to test you. Depending on the official. And he told me that. I said, okay, that's a good thing.

Interviewer: Were you with your Slovak partner for the entirety of your time here?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So for the whole five years?

Interviewee: Yeah, for the whole five years.

Interviewer: So you had her support for the whole five years?

Interviewee: Yeah, of course. Definitely.

Interviewer: Did she play like a big role in you, at least, maybe not at work, obviously, but outside of work, in your adapting to the Prague culture?

Interviewee: Of course. So my girlfriend was back then. Now she's my wife.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, did you get married here?

Interviewee: Here, yes.

Interviewer: On which year? You don't mind me asking, right?

Interviewee; 2019. No, no, no, definitely.

Interviewer: So it was like two years after you got here.

Interviewee: Yes, two years after.

Interviewer: Did you come here for her or for the job?

Interviewee: So it was, so the thing after, yeah, it's not 50-50. Of course, we wanted to be together and we had to find a place. Since she had already a job here, we said, okay, why not to go to the Czech Republic, right? So that's how we started. So if she could have been in Sweden or Norway, I would find a way how to go to Sweden.

interviewer: Because this is very important. Because a lot of my participants came here for their partners or girlfriends or boyfriends or husbands or wives. So it was very important information for me. So no matter where your girlfriend was, you would still go there? But it happened to be Prague.

interviewee: It happened to be Prague and it happened that this company provides immigration support. Not any company does that. That's true. So I didn't know that until I passed the interview. And then they told me, okay, we like you, so we're going to be working on your documents. And Zero Clue, they do it. And by the way, not any company, even here in Prague or Czech Republic, they do it. I'm not sure if I should name companies.

Interviewer: You can, you can, I can blur it out. It's okay.

Interviewee: So you have multiple international companies that do not support. I know. And say, okay, who would like to come, we would love your profile.

Interviewer: Yeah, I find that in job offers as well. Like if you're not already in the EU, we will not be taking you.

Interviewee: Yes. So how to crack that is through a company that supports...

Interviewer: That supports your immigration? Actually is a big part of why some Moroccans come here. They interview for companies and they're like, yeah, we'll help you come here. Just like, just get your bag ready and come here.

Interviewee: It happened unknowingly, by the way. It's not something known as well in Morocco or North Africa. I assume this is just my assumption. To immigrate to Eastern European countries. And the place where you come from is always out of Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands. That's it. Even US and UK are really minimal. Scandinavian is a dream for some of us, right? So the Eastern countries of Europe, for a single reason, they say, you work hard, you get well paid. And the language, right? And then there was nobody before them that comes back home and tell them, I had a good time, good country. Because if you're looking to just take a small little town in Morocco, people immigrate like... I remember there was one city near Temara. I don't remember the exact name of that area, of that town. But the majority of youngsters or 1990s youngsters or 80s, and 90s youngsters, all immigrated to Italy. Why? Because there was always the first one going there, the second one, the third one. Then they come in summer and then they show up. Everybody's having these big eyes. And then it happened that the majority of these people live in that small little town. They're all in Italy. Maybe I can ask Mom, she told me the name of the city. I don't have the...

Interviewer: Yeah, but it's interesting to hear about these things. Although there are not many Moroccans here in Prague, most of you guys know each other. Funny enough

Interviewee: We, because we look for each other, right?

interviewer: Exactly. You know, it's important to keep up with your own nationalities. I got to learn that when I was in Turkey. So, you see Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan all together. You see Palestinians all together. You see Yemenis all together. You see Egyptians are the same. And the funny thing, I'm not going to call it Moroccan, but North African altogether. I'm not saying Moroccan all together, Algerians, Tunisians. No, it's North African altogether, which is a funny thing. Very unique. You won't find this elsewhere. You won't find Yemenis with Saudis or Yemenis with Palestinians altogether. You don't find that. But you find North Africans all together. At least that was the case when I was in Turkey. And that

was the case even here. Here, because Algerians were less, Tunisians are less. So this way we couldn't find some of them. But when I was in Turkey, it was always the case. Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian all together the same case.

interviewer: Apart from the Moroccan you met at work, right? Yeah. How did you meet the others?

Because I know you met a few in your company, but how did you meet the others?

Interviewee: So, it's always somebody at work, you know somebody outside.

Interviewer: And they introduce you?

Interviewee: They introduce you And that's how you expand.

Interviewer: Did you have a Moroccan-exclusive hangout? Was it just Moroccans? Or would you always mix with the other expats?

Interviewee: We mix. There are some events. For example, we had Eid. No, it was... Eid Al-Adha Matej, he invited us to his house. They had a garden. It appeared to be his mom, his sister, and her boyfriend.

And then a bunch of Moroccans around. And as well, I shared with you the name of this Moroccan Czech. Dalila and Sonia. I'm not sure if you spoke to them.

Interviewer: I think I messaged some of them, but they didn't really reply. I messaged them on Instagram. Which I think is fair enough, because Instagram is very random.

Interviewee: No, I will speak with them. I did not meet Dalila yet. I'll meet her this week. And I'll tell you that. I mean, because you guys live in the same country, why not? Yeah, as well, through them we get to know some Czechs. They are Moroccan Czechs, so we have both of them. Which is really interesting for your projects. Yeah, through them as well we get to know more people. Yeah, these gatherings, I believe, were always mixed. We even had one Indian guy with us. Polish lady. Yeah, it was always mixed.

Interviewer: And you communicate with your wife in English? English and Turkish. Sometimes.

Interviewer: I know that you're a very unique participant because you already moved out of Prague. You don't live here anymore. Before moving, did you know you were going to move?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Or was it just like, hey, work opportunity, better pay, and you decided that my wife and I are going to move to Dubai?

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly the way I rephrased it in the second part.

Interviewer: So, moving out of Prague was just connected to better work opportunities, basically.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you see a long-term future here? Maybe in the...

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Maybe coming back?

Interviewee: For me, if you have a sort of housing, your own house, for me, Czech Republic is a perfect place to live. Personally, yeah. If you look into... I mean, Prague, Prague. That's Kládno, that's Ustín, that's Brno. Prague, Prague. Yeah. You would live in another Czech town?

Interviewee: It's funny, maybe... I don't know, maybe if you find a good price for some land or a house, you may do it, right? But again, you have that Prague vibe. That's what I love most.

Interviewer: Prague vibe. What does that mean?

Interviewee: That means now. We texted yesterday, OK, let's meet up in this place, it's easy, movement.

Interviewer: The fast pace?

Interviewee: The fast pace. A lot of people. So, when you take a drive or a tram ride, you see multiple places. History as well, because I'm interested to know, you know, events that happened here. It's like, an example that I can give you, for example, I went to Berlin for the first time last May, 2022. And you go to

the place where you have pictures of what has happened, 1930, 1940. And you feel, I felt different. You know what I mean? It's near history, too many events have happened here. And in two ways, it can attract you or it can work the opposite way. And I felt the opposite way with Berlin. Because knowing what has happened there recently, here, similar way. I felt like, for example, Radolfin building. So many writers, artists. You go to the Vinohrady castle, there are so many politicians, so many writers, so many actors. It has, it worked for me the other way around.

Interviewer: So you're attracted to the city because of the history?

Interviewee: Yes, the history, the beauty. I always call it the vibe.

Interviewer: The vibe, ok. I mean, there's no issue with how you call it. I just want to understand what you mean by it. Alright, so you might move back and you might move back to settle forever? Or have you ever thought about going back to Morocco eventually?

Interviewee: Difficult to say. It's even difficult to say if I would come back here permanently. Because as long as you are open to all options, as long as you don't restrict yourself to certain variables, right? I believe whatever opportunity comes along, then you evaluate. So before you were single, then you were having more variables. Then you get into a relationship, then you have narrowed variables. Then you have, let's say, a kid or a dog, then you have even much more narrow variables. So depending on how you pace in life, right? And what are the events that are tied up to you, right? Then you evaluate case by case. So if you would tell me, so if I had a house here, would you move to Dubai? I would say most probably no, I would say most probably yes. Two things. If I would have a house outside Prague, it would not be rented, low income, maybe if it's rented but lower margin. I would probably say no. I would have an apartment here in Prague, in which I know that if I move out, if I rent it, it's easy to be rented with a profit. I may say, hmm, maybe yes. So again, it depends on many variables that are linked to you, right? I cannot say easily, I'm planning to move back here permanently and that's going to go anywhere. So that would be kind of a that's for the sake of the interview, you know, I would say maybe yes or no.

Interviewer: Alright. I wanted to ask you like, I mean, I think I already, we already talked about it, but because you told me about your own principles. But did you feel like there was a change in you when you moved here? Like culturally speaking, although we can't define what culturally speaking means, but I was wondering if you thought that your experience here, moving here and settling here for a long term, did it change your ways as a person? Maybe different from how you were in Morocco or Turkey?

Interviewee: Oh, definitely, you know, that's a fact. It's not only the Czech Republic. Maybe I will start with a small model then I would enlarge it a bit. So moving from a rural area to a city, that's a challenge. So if you live in, I don't know, in a village for your entire, like let's say until you are 15 or 16 or 19 even, then you move to Caza or to Rabat, that's the environment change. That gives you a different personality than what you used to be before, right? Then changing a country to a country A, a totally different personality. It changes your outlook, how you see life, how you see yourself, and how you see so many things in life. Really, seriously, I'm not joking. You know, there was this quote, I'm not sure who said it, but they say one language, one personality, just like that. So I'm maybe much more comfortable speaking English with you, but I may fail to have that personality if I speak French or speak Moroccan. Maybe my personality in French is shit, Moroccan is ugh, but in English is wow or okay or you know what I mean, something like that. So I had so many moves that I'm not going to tell you, yeah, my move to Prague precisely, to Czech Republic precisely, has made you think or made you who you are now. No, it's a bit of many events, right? But if you would ask me, or I would reply in a way that the current or the previous one, which was Turkey, I would say I appreciate it more here than when I was in Turkey. Turkey gave me an education and gave me the background. I know myself, if I want to educate myself more, I would

easily continue in Turkey than in Morocco, than in here, for education-wise. I'll Turkey, I've educated myself, I would go for a PhD, many professors, some companies that I can blend in easily. So career-wise, different career than what I have right now, and in terms of learning, I would blend there more. But me as a comfortable person, living life, I would choose the Czech Republic or Prague precisely, than Morocco. But if I would want to have my parents' family, my parents' family, in terms of language, religion, and culture, I would say Morocco. And again...

Interviewer: And it changes. Did you have to give up some of your traditional cultural traits when you came here? Some of the Moroccan essence?

Interviewee: No, no. You just be who you are, and then let people in. They don't change who you are to fit in other people's circles. Because that's... That has been my case since I know myself. So you have to be flexible, but also you have to keep your... Yeah, definitely. So... Like they say, you open, but you have your own. You open, but you have your own limits, right? The moment you realize the environment where you are is going to invade too much, then you exclude yourself politically. Okay, maybe I'll take different routes, you know what I mean? It's simple.

Interviewer: I don't know, but are you religious, or is it something that is not really helpful?

Interviewee: Very frequent... A bad way of religion. How do I say this? Very lazy... Bad practicing religion. That's how I would say this. But trying my best to stay on the correct track. The core has never changed. That's the core.

Interviewer: I mean, there's no... It's just something that I'm interested in because some people would like... Some people that have closer ties to religion kind of have a little bit more trouble adjusting to a country like this. Some people who are more flexible or more open, they find it a bit easier. Interviewee: That could have affected even career-wise. For example, you sit with people... For example, the known rule don't sit at a table where there's alcohol, as an example. Right? A table where you sit is multinational. Not everybody shares with you the same religion, right? So, people drink coffee, drink water, drink beer, drink vodka, drink Lager, drink whatever. So the moment you see beer coming in, what do you exclude yourself? So there are some things that you have to adapt to. There are no general rules.

Interviewer: I always ask my Interviewees what kind of... Because I'm already done. What kind of advice would you give another Moroccan person that would want to move and settle here? For them to adapt quicker, to adapt better. If you have some advice when it comes to strategies.

Interviewee: Strategies...I believe that the first thing that needs to be done is learning the language. And this is one of the things that I feel, despite the fact that it can be hard. Maybe this is something to you Firdaousse as well, Really. I take an example of myself when I was living in Turkey. The moments I speak Turkish with everybody around, it helps me in so many ways. Countless times, countless stories that I can be telling and sharing with you. The latest things, funny, when I was in Dubai, there is a place called Global Village. Where there is a concept of having country halls. So you go to Morocco Hall, and you find yourself in Morocco, clothes, people, food, dancing, music, whatever. Then you go to Yemen, you have these funny dances, and you have plenty of varieties of honey. You find countries' specifics. So I went to Turkey because my cousin was interested in the Turkish one, so we went there. So they were with her friend, she was struggling, I mean she was negotiating and stuff, buying, whatever. I excluded myself because it was boring. I wanted to get a juice. So I went to the guy and said, can I have juice? So he is Turkish, so I spoke with him in Turkish, right? In Dubai, so I'm not even in Turkey. And then he prepared me a juice, and then I told him how much, and he said 25. I said, oh, is it? He said yes. But it's okay, just give me whatever. He wanted to give it for free because I was impressed about the price of a bloody juice. And then he gave it for free. And he said, oh, come on, it's not a big deal, it's a juice like I'm drinking

myself. And then we had a small chat, a small conversation, and he appeared to be a really nice guy. So it was vice versa, you know.

Interviewer: So language opens up doors.

Interviewee: Too many open. So that's the thing number one. Knowing about the cultural differences, knowing about Czech history. What are their sensitivities? Like, if any foreigner would move to Morocco, they would know things that they should be speaking about and things that they should be careful about, that are sensitive to Moroccans. As I would want foreigners to have that for my country, I would want to have it for myself in their country. Right. I think the third thing is to be easygoing. Easy-going and open-minded. Not open-minded in a way, but open-minded in certain ways that you need to... And then, yeah, just find happiness. Happiness is all about happiness. Nothing else.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. I spoke too much.

Interviewer: No, absolutely not. I think this is great. Yes.

[End of Interview]