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Understanding (Post-)Yugoslav Migrations through the Lenses of Current Concepts in Migration Research: Migrant Networks and Transnationalism

1. Introduction

I think everybody is sending remittances – all our people, particularly the older generation. We [the Serbs] have two households: one here [in Switzerland], an apartment with everything, and a second one in Ranovac [in Serbia].¹

Nowadays, one would say that the man quoted above is involved in transnational practices: he is engaged simultaneously at two distant places on the globe, he participates in transnational networks, he sustains two households financially and he travels a few times a year between Serbia and Switzerland. However, a few decades ago, nobody would have used the notion 'transnational' to describe these practices. Migration research was for a long time a poor cousin in the European social sciences. This has, however, dramatically changed in the last two decades, and research institutes dedicated to migration studies and migration journals are spreading like mushrooms on a warm autumn day. Put bluntly, migration has become a hot topic not only in public and political discourse but also among scholars. Little by little, a colourful spectrum of new concepts and ideas has found its way into academic discourse – for instance the notion of 'transnationalism'. One sometimes wonders whether these concepts contribute to a better understanding of migration processes and their effects, or whether they are not perhaps more like 'old wine in new skins'.

The aim of this article is to concentrate on a few selected current concepts in migration theory: looking through the lenses of these ideas I shall elaborate what they potentially reveal about (post-)Yugoslav migration. I will discuss the concepts of migration networks, transnationalism and methodological nationalism, and look at their usefulness for the study of (post-)Yugoslav migration. My reflections are limited, however: they are based on my knowledge of just a small part of the emigration movements out of the region of former Yugoslavia – mainly in the Kosovo-Albanian and Serb context and the immigration of these nationals into Switzerland.

¹ Participant in a focus group interview.

2. *Migrant networks and transnationalism: the need for differentiation*

It is more than a decade since the idea of transnationalism was introduced into academic discourse. Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues² apparently touched the *Zeitgeist*, as the concept has evolved into one of the most popular among migration scholars. From then on, this new perspective on migration phenomena put the accent on the modes of construction and reconstruction of networks by migrants in more than one society and on the ways in which transnational spaces are evolving – as the notion says – and crossing national boundaries. Generally speaking, the idea of transnationalism emerged from the insight that immigrants maintain ties with their countries of origin, making home and host society a single arena for social action by moving back and forth across international borders and between different cultures and social systems, and by exploiting transnational relations as a form of social capital for their life strategies.³ A number of case studies showed how in the migration process, new interdependencies are built up and how migrants are involved in creative social, economic and political activities in transnational fields all over the world.⁴

Concomitantly to studies on transnationalism, we have witnessed a growing interest in the analysis of migration networks. Since the 1960s, 'network' has been a key word in the literature on migration: by studying the links between migrants and non-migrants as a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relationships, researchers have been emphasising that personal networks can be understood as conduits of information as well as social and financial assistance, thereby shaping and sustaining migration.⁵ The central idea underlying the popularity of migration networks in recent studies (implicitly or explicitly) is their rendering of a pool of different kinds of resources. I would even argue that there exists something like a scientific *mot d'ordre* whereby migration networks constitute a form of social capital which enhances and facilitates migration by decreasing its costs and risks.⁶ For instance, once started, emigration becomes self-sustaining due to well-established migrants' networks. Once they arrive in an immigration country, migrants can rely on their network for different forms of support; it is a kind of 'diasporic social capital', which allows the settled migrants to capitalize on the ethno-national resources of the established community in question. When speaking about 'circulatory' migration, meaning migrants circulating in fluid networks conducting economic exchanges between different cities, the social capital consists of the readiness and availability to be mobile by capitalizing on a transnational network of friends or family that is built on the basis of common entrepreneurial experiences.⁷

² SCHILLER et al., *Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework*.

³ VERTOVEC, *Conceiving And Researching*.

⁴ E. g. PRIES, *Transnationale Migration*.

⁵ BOYD, *Family and Personal Networks*.

⁶ BOURDIEU, *Le capital social*; PORTES, *Social Capital*.

⁷ MOROKVASIC, *Transnational Mobility*; TARRIUS, *La mondialisation*.

This perception of migration networks as a form of social capital also underlies assumptions about the existence of transnational social spaces.

Most scholars agree that transnationalism is not a new phenomenon as such, but should rather be understood as a new perspective on migration processes.⁸ The historical perspective shows that migration processes have always been accompanied by long-distance practices: writing letters home or being involved in political activities in the former home country was also the rule for most European emigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century, for instance. However with enhanced globalization processes, the development of communication technologies and cheap transport, these transnational connections have certainly intensified. Much empirical research on transnationalism has helped to clarify some of its conceptual and theoretical issues. These studies have put ideas about transnationalism into perspective, sometimes even questioning the concept as a whole, and the initial euphoria has been replaced by a certain sobriety.⁹

The catch-word of 'network' has also come under fire: scholars have pointed to the fact that migration networks are complex and that more than a merely 'metaphorical approach' is needed in order to understand the evolution and composition of migration networks, as well as the constraints and potentials growing out of them. When investigating migrant networks it can, for instance, be valuable to look for ties of different qualities, for fleeting and dynamic elements of network as well as strong and family ties, as these ties of different nature have different outcomes with regard to human action. Ties cannot be reduced to a narrow dichotomous view in which someone has a (transnational) relation to another person or not, for this view fails to reveal whether or not this relation has social relevance and in which situation the relation is of importance.¹⁰

One of the main benefits of the idea of 'transnationalism' is, without doubt, that it allows to overcome and connect the bi-polar approach of classical migration theory: until recently one group of researchers has been analysing the causes of migration (often reduced to push-pull-factors and economically motivated rational-choice approaches); a second group of scholars has been occupied with the effects of migration, analysing assimilation or integration processes of 'uprooted' migrants in their new environment. The transnational perspective allows us to bring together emigration, immigration, integration, and return as they are perceived as being steps in one and the same process taking place in a transnational space. Most social scientists in the field would agree that migration is often circular in nature rather than irreversible. Social relations are not bound to fixed places and migration decisions are not separated from processes of adaptation to a new environment. This allows us for instance – and this is of importance for this article – to think about (post-)Yugoslav migration while at the same time taking into account the conditions in the region of origin and places of immigration of these migrants.

⁸ E. g. LEVITT et al., *International Perspectives on Transnational Migration*.

⁹ AL-ALI, KOSER, *Transnationalism, International Migration*; WALDINGER, FITZGERALD, *Transnationalism in Question*.

¹⁰ DAHINDEN, Prishtina – Schlieren; GURAK, CACES, *Migration Networks*.

3. 'Missing' transnationalism among (post-)Yugoslav migrants? Attempts at an explanation

⁷ Some voices have been insisting lately that the notion of transnationalism – notwithstanding its usefulness – needs more differentiation: certain empirical studies show, for instance, that only a minority of, and by no means all, migrants are involved in transnational activities. A study conducted in the USA revealed that the ones who are engaged in stable transnational practices as transnational entrepreneurs or in the political arena were mainly well-educated and integrated male migrants. Furthermore, even if migrants do practise a kind of occasional transnationalism this does not mean that stable transnational practices will develop in the future.¹¹ In other words, the question arises whether transnational ties maybe do not have the weight that could have been expected from the early studies, when transnationalism was celebrated as a new form of life of all migrants.

Two empirical studies on migration from the (post-)Yugoslav region not only underscore these results, but can also contribute to explaining these facts. In a recently completed study, we were interested in a specific form of transnational practice, concretely in the remitting behaviour of Serbian migrants in Switzerland.¹² A survey¹³ among Serb households showed that remitting behaviour is not the same for all but rather mirrors the heterogeneity of these people's biographies and their socio-economic status in Switzerland. Research suggests that not all Serbs remit – a quarter did not remit money and/or goods in the past twelve months – and that different factors influence their involvement in this specific transnational practice: the better educated and the higher the household income of the Serbs, the more likely they are to remit, and the larger the amounts transferred. Furthermore, Serbs who have become naturalized Swiss citizens are more likely to send more remittances. We might say that the economically best integrated (males) in Switzerland are the ones who are most involved in transnational economic activities. Another important result is that there is almost nothing of what we call *stable* economic transnationalism among the Serb migrants in Switzerland: first, members of the second generation are overrepresented among the non-remitters, raising serious questions about the future stability of these monetary flows. Second, the study shows that transnational ethnic businesses between Serbia and Switzerland are rare: only a small minority of the respondents in Switzerland own a business or at least

¹¹ E. g. GUARNIZO et al., *Assimilation and Transnationalism*; PORTES, *Conclusion: Theoretical Convergences*.

¹² LERCH et al., *Remittance Behaviour*.

¹³ The remittance behaviour was approached by two different methodologies: first, a telephone survey (in Serbian) among 600 Serb migrants was launched: 500 interviews with citizens of Serbia and Montenegro (excluding Kosovars and Montenegrins) living in Switzerland holding a resident or settlement permit, and 100 interviews with recently naturalized Serbian migrants were conducted. Second, focus groups with migrants, ethnic business holders and informal remittance service providers were organised. The study was mandated and financed by the Swiss Secretary of State for the Economy.

do business in Serbia. To put it differently, there are almost no transnational entrepreneurs, and those who are, are the best educated and economically best off. This example illustrates the need to distinguish between different forms of transnationalism, for instance between occasional and more stable forms.

A similar pattern emerges from a second study where we were interested in the personal social networks of Albanian-speaking persons originating from former Yugoslavia living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.¹⁴ Transnational relations have very little importance within the social support networks of these Albanian-speaking migrants and transnational social spaces are almost non-existent. Data suggest that on the level of everyday life and daily interaction, Albanian migrants have developed a strong local orientation and we discovered highly localized networks. Over three quarters of the persons in the personal networks of the interviewees lived in Switzerland, mostly even in the same canton. The networks however displayed a strong ethnic homogeneity: Albanian-speaking immigrants rely on other Albanians when they need general advice about professional or family affairs, economic or emotional support. Leisure is also spent with other Albanian speakers. In addition, Albanians turn to other Albanians to find a job or an apartment. On the basis of the results of this study, the picture emerges of an 'Albanian community' which is almost hermetically closed and – at least regarding the first generation of migrants – quite disconnected from Swiss society; but this 'community' is not at all of a transnational nature.

With regard to practices of political transnationalism a similar picture emerges: not all Albanians maintain and participate in transnational political activities. There is a specific group who is engaged in Albanian migrant associations and political parties, mainly refugees who are well-educated males. Albanians having arrived in Switzerland as *Fremdarbeiter* and also women are only rarely engaged in political transnationalism. Finally, similar to the results of the study on the Serbs, stable transnational practices among Albanian speakers are almost entirely absent in the economic realm. This does not alter the fact that Albanian migrants support their relatives in the country of origin whenever they have the financial means to do so by sending remittances. Nonetheless, there are no specific transnational and ethnic businesses of a sustainable nature, either in the national or in the transnational context.¹⁵

From these two empirical studies we can conclude that stable transnational spaces between Serbian or Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland and their place of origin are rare and fragmented. What are, then, the reasons for the limited transnational participation of these immigrants in Switzerland? Scholars have argued that certain conditions have to be fulfilled to allow for the creation of transnationalism. These conditions are dependent on the legal, social, political and economic factors prevailing in the countries of immigration, as well as the countries of emigration. Transnational practices are not free from the

¹⁴ DAHINDEN, *Contesting Transnationalism?*

¹⁵ There might be transnational economic practices of illegal or illicit character, but I did not investigate these (see below).

constraints and opportunities imposed by the local context.¹⁶ If we take a closer look at the case studies presented, it becomes clear that the explanations for 'missing' transnationalism are highly interwoven with the power relations and structural features of Swiss and former Yugoslav society.

It is the economically best integrated in the labour market and the naturalized Serbs who are able to build up a transnational space: they are the ones who have acquired specific resources in Switzerland. But conversely, the example of the Serbs illustrates that transnational practices are influenced – among other factors – by the local context in Switzerland. We can even ask if integration – meaning having access to the important resources of the host society and acquiring different forms of capital – might not be a precondition for the development of stable transnational spaces. The least integrated people – for instance unemployed persons – with low education are less likely to remit.

In this line of argument we could maintain, with regard to the second study, that the 'missing' transnationalism could – at least partially – be explained by the disadvantaged and under-privileged position of the Albanian migrants in Switzerland and by their limited personal resources, particularly in terms of cultural capital. It is well known that many Albanian immigrants in Switzerland face significant problems of marginalization and pauperization. They sometimes live in precarious circumstances and are often unemployed. In general, we might say that the socio-economic and professional status of members of this group is very low and mechanisms of exclusion based on discrimination can be observed.¹⁷ For these reasons we assume that the social capital that Albanian migrants can mobilize through their networks is very weak. If a migrant's personal network mainly includes people with limited resources, the volume of social capital that this migrant is able to mobilize is quite limited. This could be a factor for Albanian migrants not being able to build up transnational social fields: they are mainly in contact with other Albanians, most of whom have limited personal resources. This argument goes even further: as social capital is mainly a local asset, it is very hard to transfer it from one country to another. We can therefore assume that immediately after immigration – at least if we defend the idea that a person does not migrate with all the persons of her/his personal network – part of the social capital of the migration network has to be constructed under the conditions of the new environment. If these conditions are of an under-privileged character – for instance lacking in social, political or economic possibilities, or discrimination – the opportunities for the manifestation of transnationalism will be very limited. Therefore, my argument is that transferability of social capital increases in parallel with the emergence of transnational social space. Conversely, low levels of transnationalism can – at least partially – be equated with low levels of social capital in networks.

However, it is not only the local context and the constraints of living in Switzerland that influence the development of transnational space, but also the other end of the transnational chain: the situation in post-war Serbia and above all in Kosovo is also not favourable

¹⁶ AL-ALI, KOSER, *Transnationalism, International Migration*.

¹⁷ FIBBI et al., *Le passeport ou le diplôme?*; WANNER, *Migration et integration*.

for transnational practices, as economic and political stability are far from being a reality. In the eyes of the Serbs interviewed, it was the present bad economic situation in their country of origin and the unaccomplished democratic process, which kept them from investing in a transnational business because they feared the risks of losing money. Furthermore, they mentioned a lack of “business culture” and a lack of trust in the government as major determinants for the absence of transnational economic activities and investment behaviour. In short, the general conditions in former Yugoslavia are not very favourable for economic transnational activity, which impedes the evolution of transnational spaces.

To put it differently, neither of the two poles of the transnational chain offers the necessary resources and it seems logical that stable transnational practices will not develop. From the case studies presented, transnationalism thus appears to be just another outcome of immigrant adaptation to the receiving society. Adaptation in the receiving country parallels the development of a stable transnationalism: the cultivation of strong networks with the country of origin and the implementation of economic and political initiatives based on dense networks may mirror the fact that immigrants have gained access to important resources in the receiving society during the assimilation process. A few years ago, Thomas Faist developed a typology of different types of transnational social spaces arising from international migration.¹⁸ The one described here could be classified as transnational kinship groups where the primary resource in social ties is reciprocity.

Neither the Serbs nor the Albanian speakers could be labelled as transnational communities. However, the question arises whether there might not be other forms of transnationalism among these groups which could not be gathered through the conducted studies, because grasping these forms would require differently designed research. I am speaking about circulating transnational entrepreneurs active somewhere between formal and informal economies: a question which arises – but cannot be answered here – is that it would be interesting to see whether these specific contexts in former Yugoslavia and Switzerland might give rise to an economic transnationalism of a circulatory nature and whether, secondly, this is more likely to be of illicit character. Among the migrants from former Yugoslavia there are illegal and violent networks working in a transnational way, for instance networks engaged in drugs and human trafficking, but also networks operating at the border between the formal and informal economies, such as smugglers (see below).

There may be yet another factor that contributes to ‘missing’ transnationalism among the settled migrants of this origin in Switzerland: I will argue the premise that nationalism has some serious implications for migrants which both enhance and prevent the development of different transnational activities. In the next section I will look more closely at this issue

¹⁸ FAIST, *Transnationalization in International Migration*.

3.1 The premises of nationalism and migration

It is clear that 'nation' is a very important concept in migration research. We find the concept in the notion of 'transnationalism' as well as in the concept of 'methodological nationalism'. Reflections about these concepts can give valuable insight when it comes to understanding migration from (post-)Yugoslav space to Western European countries.

The idea that the world was naturally divided into nation-states and that these states were the units for analysis had the effect of blinding not only politicians but also researchers. The concept of methodological nationalism has been put forward in order to describe this weakness of social science: the critique refers to the unquestioned transfer of boundaries, categories and variables of the national view into the scholarly perspective, and to the excessive weight of the nation-state as a category of reference, even among social scientists.¹⁹ Ernest Gellner showed in his works how the supposedly natural congruence between national, territorial, political, economic and social boundaries actually emerged in due course from nationalism and nation-building processes.²⁰ For Gellner, nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that political and national units should be congruent, so having a nation with its people and culture is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but has come to appear as such.²¹ This is what he called the premises of nationalism. Methodological nationalism, in this line of thinking, has been defined by Wimmer and Schiller as "the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world".²²

It therefore does not come as a surprise that although migration is a structural element of human history, the control of migration has preoccupied policy makers since the formation of the modern nation-state: as nationalist concepts of people and society took hold, the conception of immigrants began to change and free circulation of humans was replaced by historically new forms of border control. With the creation of the modern nation-state, belonging to a specific ethnic or national group started not only to be naturally given, but furthermore to determine access to the territory, rights and – later on with the establishment of the welfare state – services the modern state is supposed to guarantee to its citizens.²³ It became necessary for a person to have a permit to enter a country and reside there, creating the differentiation between nationals who did belong to the polity and 'foreigners' who did not. Wimmer and Schiller showed convincingly how immigrants must appear as anomalies to these premises of nationalism by destroying the isomorphism between people, sover-

¹⁹ BECK, *Macht und Gegenmacht*, 84–94.

²⁰ GELLNER, *Nations and Nationalism*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²² WIMMER, SCHILLER, *Methodological Nationalism*, 302.

²³ MACKERT, *Kampf um Zugehörigkeit*. It is obvious that methodological nationalism not only has its impact on the perception of migrants, but also on the perception of 'national minorities': this is without doubt of high importance in the case of former Yugoslavia. For the relation between ethnicity/nationality/citizenship, see ALLCOCK, *Explaining Yugoslavia*; DENICH, *Unmaking Multiethnicity*.

eign and citizenry, but also between people and nation and between people and solidarity group.²⁴ Immigrants are an exception to the rule of sedentariness within the boundaries of nation-states.²⁵ It follows that living as foreigners in a 'host nation' means not having the same rights as other citizens and being deprived of a set of specific resources, both material and symbolic.

Nation-states have the sovereignty to define which citizens from other states are admitted with which rights to their territory. Conversely, states also have the sovereignty to define which parts of their national population should or should not leave the territory of the state; they can try to regulate not only immigration but also emigration. To come back to the idea of *transnationalism*: it shows that this notion only makes sense since the establishment of a world naturally divided into endless nation-states. I propose that these ideas allow us to better understand the process of migration from the (post-)Yugoslav region. I will therefore look more closely at the premises of nationalism and how they shaped emigration out of Yugoslavia, but also immigration into Switzerland, as well as the 'side effects' they had.

3.2 Out-migration from socialist Yugoslavia

Migration out of socialist Yugoslavia was, from the very beginning, highly influenced by these premises of nationalism. During the first years of socialist Yugoslavia's existence (1945–early 1960s), the country was – like other socialist countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – a closed country in terms of outward migration. Yugoslav economic emigration to Switzerland, as well as to other countries, started in the early 1960s. The Yugoslav Federation's political decision to open up its borders for emigration was associated with the launching of liberal (national) economic reforms in 1965.²⁶ Whereas internal population movements (from the less developed southern regions to the northern ones) had already started after World War Two, the north-western parts of the country were the first to be affected by mass labour emigration. In the 1960s the majority of Yugoslav migrants in Europe, and in Switzerland, were Croatian. At the beginning of the 1970s, however, the regional pattern of emigration progressively changed, affecting the south-eastern parts of the country with increasing intensity.²⁷ This temporary economic migration, which has been "subject to state organisation since 1965", was considered to be a form of "demographic management" in order to export labour surplus and to stabilize the economy through the inflow of currencies from the returnees.²⁸ Yugoslav migration policy was ideologically (and socially) justified on the basis of the assumption that migration was only temporary, and that migrants still formed an integral component of the so-called Yugoslav working class.

²⁴ WIMMER, SCHILLER, *Methodological Nationalism*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 309–10.

²⁶ SCHIERUP, *Former Yugoslavia*.

²⁷ MESIC, *External Migration*.

²⁸ MOLNAR, *The Sociology of Migration*, 110.

Their positions in the receiving countries as well as their return were therefore not merely of their own concern, but the responsibility of the whole socialist and national community. This social concern of the Yugoslav state about its migrants led to the signing of employment contracts, the establishment of social security conventions (with Switzerland in 1964), the designation of diplomatic-consular representatives who, besides their standard consular functions, were given the task to “protect” the interests of Yugoslav migrants, and the encouragement of migrants to join clubs and associations for a better “social-organization”.²⁹

3.3 In-migration into Switzerland: categorizing migrants

The norms of nationalism were not only mirrored by the Yugoslav emigration policy and the socialist state of Yugoslavia, but also by Swiss immigrant admission policy: through the ‘ethno-national sorting’ of its admission policy Switzerland created different categories of migrants. In 1931 it implemented for the first time a law controlling immigration and defining the rights of the ‘foreigners’ on its territory, thereby ending a phase of liberal circulation. After the Second World War, Switzerland needed foreign labour: former Yugoslavia was, after Italy and Spain as from the 1960s, a central recruitment region for Switzerland’s so-called *Fremdarbeiter* (“alien workers”). Interestingly enough, while in Germany migrant workers were called ‘guest workers’, in Switzerland they were labelled from the outset by their ‘otherness’, i.e. *Fremdarbeiter*. This fact mirrors the logic of the nation-state described above in seeing immigrants as ‘natural’ others. With a shift in immigration policies, specifically with the implementation of the so-called ‘three-circles’ model in 1991, the recruitment of workers from former Yugoslavia was no longer possible. They were soon categorized as members of the ‘third’ circle and had no chance of obtaining a work permit anymore.³⁰ People from the third circle have been seen as “culturally the most distanced” – meaning that by their ‘otherness’ they produce xenophobia in Switzerland and they can only be integrated with great difficulty.³¹ At this point, the nexus between the two policy fields of migration and integration became strong and inextricable, and both are impregnated with the premises of nationalism: nationality is not only seen as naturally linked to a certain territory, but also as a kind of backpack that the migrants carry with them. In this backpack one finds not only the nationality but also a corresponding culture that dictates the behaviour of the nationals in question. Furthermore, culture has been conjugated with geographical distance with the result that the further away people live, the larger their assumed cultural distance to the Swiss.

²⁹ BALETIC, International Migration; MESIC, External Migration. These practices could be equated with transnationalism as well, even though they might never have been looked at in this light. See DAHINDEN, MORET, *Transnationale Aktivitäten*.

³⁰ SWISS FEDERAL COUNCIL, *Bericht des Bundesrates* (1991).

³¹ HOFFMANN-NOWOTNY, *Chancen und Risiken*.

For most Swiss citizens it may be obvious that 'the Swiss' are far from being a homogeneous group with an overarching collective identity; in fact they are plural and diverse on different levels. But with regard to immigrants, ethnic or national groups are seen as invariable and group formation of immigrants along ethnic lines is taken for granted; and we witness the habit of referring to such groups as "Turks", "Yugos" or "Albanians", as though they were homogeneous and clearly circumscribed and as though their members formed a unitary collective with a common purpose and a common culture. This thinking entails the phenomenon, for which Rogers Brubaker coined the word "groupism": the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous, and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life to which interests and agency can be attributed.³² Each of these groups is defined in national or ethnic terms and each group is said to have its own culture, which is responsible for the behaviour of the members of the group in question.³³ It even seems, if I may put this in a slightly ironic way, that these ethnic or national groups form a kind of extended arm of their 'naturally' and territorially defined ethnic or national origin. In this way, ethnic groups or communities are transformed into transnational ethnic groups.³⁴ The further away these groups are from their original national territory, the greater their 'cultural distance' from the Swiss is perceived to be.³⁵

Going back to the process of categorizing migrants we can summarize that through the shift in immigration policy in 1991, people from former Yugoslavia were classed among the most 'culturally different' – placed in the third circle: from this moment on, they could only immigrate to Switzerland through family reunification or by seeking asylum (Switzerland implemented its first law of asylum in 1979, again producing a new category of migrants). In other words, the category of asylum seeker was not only a product of the 'ethnic conflicts'³⁶ in former Yugoslavia, but also of the Swiss nation-state finding new ways of categorizing people along ethno-cultural lines. The civil wars within the different republics of former Yugoslavia led to a phase of mass emigration to Switzerland, either through family reunification or asylum. It should be said, however, that many of the asylum seekers returned after the wars.

From 1998 onwards, Switzerland adopted a dual admission policy – in line with most European countries – which is still based on the premises of ethno-national categories and cultural distance, but which introduced a different logic in the categorizing process. Mean-

³² BRUBAKER, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 35.

³³ It is obvious that the notion of culture which is underlying these debates is highly problematic and, from a social science perspective, *démodé* (HANNERZ, *When Culture is Everywhere*; WICKER, *From Complex Culture to Cultural Complexity*). Contemporary notions of culture highlight the capability of human beings to interpret interaction and give sense to the world. Culture in this way has to be analysed, as 'having a culture' does not exist (DAHINDEN, *Was heißt schon interkulturell?*).

³⁴ DAHINDEN, *Deconstructing Mythological Foundations*.

³⁵ See CASTLES, *La sociologie et la peur*.

³⁶ That the conflicts in former Yugoslavia have been 'ethnically framed' is also closely related to the norms of nationalism.

while the right was created for European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) citizens and residents of its member states to move and settle within Europe on a free basis. On the other hand, Switzerland as well as most EU states developed restrictive and defensive immigration policies to keep out migrants from outside the EU/EFTA, among others also from former Yugoslavia. For non-EU/EFTA citizens, the new policies offer educational and work opportunities exclusively to highly qualified foreigners. Semantically, ethno-national categories have been linked more and more with a strong hierarchization between desired and unsolicited migrants. One could bring these processes together under the category of the wanted travellers on the one side – the highly skilled migrants who are supposed to be easily integrated into the host societies, as is the common hypothesis – and the remaining migrants on the other side. For the non-solicited and non-invited migrants new and increasing barriers have been erected and for them, national boundaries and borders and the sovereign right of states to decide on admission of non-nationals have gained importance.³⁷

4. *Effects: processes of social exclusion?*

It is important to note that these processes of categorization which seem 'natural' have important consequences for the lives of migrants from former Yugoslavia. First, people of this origin can no longer come legally to Switzerland unless they are highly qualified or through family reunification. Interestingly enough, among the wanted travellers we incidentally find a new incoming flow of well-qualified persons from the regions of former Yugoslavia.³⁸ However, all other post-Yugoslav migrants entering Switzerland are criminalized, as their entries are illicit. Furthermore, these processes based on cultural 'otherness' have some effects at which we shall look in the next section.

It seems obvious that, with a spiralling pattern of new measures to restrict and control migration among the Western European states, 'innovative' new forms of immigration, new actors and new dynamics will also develop. First, immigration is increasingly being criminalized, which has specific effects, also with regard to migrants from former Yugoslavia: tougher regulation has by definition led to more illegality and irregularity, creating opportunities for new actors like smugglers and traffickers. At least we can confidently state that the new migration policy has created another important category of migrants: *sans papiers* as they are commonly called in Switzerland, or undocumented migrants, meaning migrants living and working in Switzerland with no legal residence and working permit.³⁹

³⁷ PENNIX, Introduction.

³⁸ GROSS, Immigration to Switzerland.

³⁹ Irregular migration is a complex and diverse concept that requires careful clarification, which cannot be done here. It is important to recognise that there are a variety of routes into irregularity: irregular migration includes people who enter a country without the proper authority (for example through clandestine entry and entry with fraudulent documents); people who

The phenomenon of undocumented, and hence illegal, migrants has also started to bother the Swiss government, which mandated a study in order to measure the scale of the *sans papiers*.⁴⁰ This and other research in this field showed that among the irregular migrants living and working in Switzerland, there is a consistent proportion of people from former Yugoslav countries. Hence, we are witnessing a criminalization of migrants of that origin.

Moreover, during the 1990s, the phenomenon of undocumented migrants linked to human trafficking – defined here as the facilitation of illegal entry to states for profit – has gained a lot of attention in the international arena. Meanwhile, European states have accorded highest priority to the fight against undocumented migrants and human trafficking. On the other side, social scientists have started to differentiate: in the public debate there is widespread ‘moral panic’ linking trafficking to organised crime, to threats to sovereignty and the internal security of states, and to the exploitation of human beings, all intensifying the picture of the ‘enemy immigrant’, which is predicated upon the norms of nationalism. However, social scientists found little evidence for claims that organized crime is involved in human smuggling.⁴¹ They suggest that many smuggling operations take place within the respective ethnic community or within family and acquaintances.

As long as Yugoslav migrants were liberally admitted to Europe, smuggling and *sans papiers* were subordinate issues. However, with the introduction of the distinction between wanted and un-wanted migrants and the categorization of migrants, smuggling has acquired a certain normality: Efionayi-Mäder et al. showed, based on interviews with Kosovo-Albanians, Iraqis and Sri Lankans in Switzerland, that all these persons who requested asylum in Switzerland in the 1990s had been smuggled at some point along the trajectory that brought them to that country.⁴² In short, we witness new trajectories and categories of migrants also among the ones originating from former Yugoslavia.

The production of new categories of migrants on the basis of national criteria and ‘cultural distance’ had yet another side effect which I want to discuss briefly: it seems obvious that the way from creating a mosaic of nationally defined and internally homogenous and bounded immigrant groups to a hierarchization of these groups is now far advanced: up to the 1980s Yugoslav immigrants remained relatively unnoticed by the Swiss public, although they were the *Fremdarbeiter* – the alien workers. But in parallel to the reinforcement of ‘otherness’ in Swiss immigration law through the model of circles of cultural distance, the Yugoslavs have come under fire from the media and in public: drug dealing, violence, pa-

remain in a country in contravention of their authority (for example by staying after the expiry of a visa or work permit, through sham marriages or fake adoptions, as bogus students or fraudulently self-employed); or people moved by migrant smugglers or human trafficking (EFIONAYI-MÄDER, CATTACIN, *Illegal in der Schweiz*; KOSER, *Irregular Migration*). There were *sans papiers* in Switzerland already in the 1970s, however with the increasingly restrictive policy the phenomenon has grown considerably.

⁴⁰ LONGCHAMP, *Sans Papiers in der Schweiz*.

⁴¹ LACZKO, *Data and Research*; VAN LIEMPT, DOOMERNIK, *Migrant's Agency*.

⁴² EFIONAYI-MÄDER et al., *Asyldestination Europa*.

triarchal culture and family structure, crime, and high unemployment are the catchwords, which are today connected with this section of the population. There has been an increasing tendency to explain the observed social exclusion of some of the immigrants of these origins by stressing their cultural peculiarities and differences – or even their cultural ‘incompatibility’ as some right-wing parties did.

At the same time, the ‘ethnic framing’ of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia produced the effect that the group in question was split up along the same ethno-national lines. The Yugoslav *Fremdarbeiter* changed semantically from hard-working “Yugos” to Serbs, Albanians, Bosnians and Croats: again a hierarchization of these groups took place, with some of them even becoming ‘culturally’ more different than others. Croats were now considered Europeans; Albanians were – culturally speaking – the most distanced persons. That this kind of categorization process can result in exclusion seems logical: recently, a study showed that young people having an Albanian name are highly discriminated against when looking for work.⁴³ When in 2006 thirteen youngsters – six naturalized Swiss of Yugoslav and Turkish origins, two Serbs, two Macedonians, one Bosnian, one Italian and one person from the Dominican Republic – violated a thirteen year old girl in Zurich, the explanations heard in public for this horrible offence were all culturally tinged, as though it were their culture which rendered them dangerous, and some political parties were demanding processes of de-naturalization of the youngsters. It is obvious that in the public imagination the premises of nationalism are fixed and unmovable: nobody would speak about de-naturalization of Swiss-born boys who had committed the same offence and nobody would explain their behaviour by their cultural background. Although some of the offenders have acquired Swiss nationality, in the national imagination, they still do not belong to this state, but are guided in their actions by their backpack from their ancestral homeland, even though they may never have lived there. This is a concrete example of how the premises of nationalism create strong hierarchization and processes of exclusion which are difficult to counter, as they seem to be ‘natural’.⁴⁴

It comes as no surprise, however, that we find the same tendency to frame and categorize themselves in essentially ethno-national categories among the immigrants from former Yugoslavia in Switzerland: if going abroad involves escaping repression by another ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ group, as was the case, for instance, for the Albanian-speaking migrants who left Kosovo in the 1980s or 1990s, and if it involves being able to be ‘more Albanian’ in the new host country, capitalizing on the ethnic connection is a logical behaviour. The growing nationalism and politicization of ethnicity in the Balkans has also had its effect on established diasporic communities in immigration contexts, contributing to a growing consciousness and essentialization along ethnic lines within immigrant communities. From this perspective, the ethnic homogeneity of immigrants is therefore also, but not only, directly linked –

⁴³ FIBBI et al., *Le passeport eu le diplôme?*

⁴⁴ Just to be clear: there is no apology for this offence, but the reasons why some persons do commit this kind of offence are obviously more complex.

in a highly interwoven world – to events taking place in geographically quite distant places, underscoring methodological nationalism and also being *transnation*

5. By way of conclusion: TransNationalism

I would maintain that the transnational perspective allows us to understand migration phenomena in greater depth by widening our horizons. This is, however, only the case if we differentiate between different and specific morphologies of transnational practices and if we take seriously the ‘*nation*’ part in the notion of transnationalism. Methodological nationalism and the premises of nationalism not only shape the conception of migration – emigration as well as immigration and processes of assimilation – but they also strongly influence the politics of states and public perception as well as the self-description of migrants. These ideas have far reaching effects as they are directly linked to processes of exclusion.

However, one might have to distinguish carefully between different practices of transnationalism: (post-)Yugoslav migration was and is transnational in character and has developed different forms of transnationalism. Still, we need more research in order to understand the different transnational morphologies in greater depth. Furthermore, I hope to have shown that the nation-state had and still has a major impact, not only on emigration from former Yugoslavia, but also on immigration into Switzerland.