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**TRANSNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND INTEGRATION OF
THE PEOPLE FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN THE AREA OF
BRNO**

FINAL ESSAY

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Abstract

Essay is written in the form of the research proposal for the research for master thesis. It presents the topic of future research, its relevance and importance, as well as motives for choosing it. Afterwards there are discussed few crucial concepts for contemporary sociological migration theories. Those are the concepts of transnationalism, transnational social fields, ethnic groups, processes of immigrants' assimilation, integration, incorporation, and inclusion as the last step or sign of complete acceptance into host society. There are used few research reports as the examples of our future interpretations and conclusions on migrant's transnational activities and integration in Czech society. Mostly there are cited authors who led the research on similar topic in the context of Dutch society. At the end there are listed main research aims and questions, as well as methods and sample. In conclusion there is written current plan for the research, and few general expectations and presumptions based on literature used in the essay.

Key words: Transnationalism, transnational activities, assimilation, structural integration, social and cultural integration

TRANSNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND INTEGRATION OF THE PEOPLE FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IN THE AREA OF BRNO

1. Introduction

Today's world is so globalized and interconnected that it constantly becomes harder to track and predict current, and even more future flows of the people and all the kinds of capitals they are carrying around. Since the politics of the states and rules of global economy are demanding classifications, and sort of order of all the moving throughout the world, they become interesting for social researches and discussions too. Moreover, social sciences such as sociology and anthropology can work for state policies, and can be quite significant in their constructions and changes that happen. Here, however, we would not do anything like that. The purpose of this paper is discussion of the few key concepts in contemporary migration theories in order to understand them and apply in dynamics of Czech society, precisely in the area of Brno, which will result with a research for master thesis. Opportunity of writing this essay will be used for thinking and articulating research questions and aims, and putting them in the right theoretical context.

The topic will be transnational activities and structural, social, and cultural integration of the people from former Yugoslavia, or today's Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia in the area of Brno. To be more specific, it will be about how transnational involvement of immigrants in Brno relates to their integration or incorporation into Czech society. I find this topic interesting, important, and relevant because of the growing number of people from listed countries in Brno. By living here and participating in different social, economic, and cultural activities, they are influencing all these conditions of life in Brno, and contributing to its multiculturalism. As we are living in globalized world parts of which are constantly becoming more connected, it is important to understand that people living in immigrant societies are also influencing their societies of origin – again by contributing to their social, economic, cultural, and political fields. Living kind of transnational life myself made me interested in described topic. Namely, since February 2013 I have been living in Brno officially, but remained in connection with different cities where I was living previously – my hometown, town where I was studying, and town where I spent few months as an exchange student. By living in Brno I got to know large number of people with similar lifestyles. At the same time I was reading more literature on migration

theories, and that is how I realized that described topic would be more than compatible with my personal, as well as academic interests.

Most of the authors (Portes et al., 1999; Joppke and Morawska, 2003; Levitt, 2003; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004) whose works were read while preparing for writing this paper agree that contemporary sociological theories about migrations and researches with related topics should be positioned beyond borders of nation states. As Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 595) write while paraphrasing Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994) “now scholars increasingly recognize that some migrants and their descendants remain strongly influenced by their continuing ties to their home country or by social networks that stretch across national borders. They see migrants’ cross border ties as a variable and argue that to understand contemporary migration, the strength, influence, and impact of these ties must be empirically assessed.” What they actually call for is transnational perspective on migration.

2. Transnational perspective on migrations and related theoretical concepts

When it comes to transnational perspective and the concepts connected to it, there is a debate about its previous existence. In other words, social scientists discuss if transnationalism is kind of new social phenomenon, or have it already been immanent as long as people have been migrating from one place to another, but not named and as popular and common concept as it is in the time of globalization. Following what Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes write, transnationalism as theoretical concept has occurred in the early 1990s, when anthropologists noticed continuous interactions between migrants’ sending and receiving countries (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, according to Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes, 2006: 285). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 596) also argue that the concept of society should be reformulated for this purpose and that our “analytical lens” should be “broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind”. Deduced from above-written, transnational migrations would be migrations in which persons, despite of moving across national borders, settling, and establishing relations in the new country, keep maintaining relations in the countries of their origins (Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes, 2006: 286). As we are mentioning transformation of the understanding of society, it is useful to say more about the notion of transnational social field. According to Portes et al. (1999: 217-218), it “is composed of a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages,

having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders”. Nevertheless, those could be people who live their lives and have relations in more than only two different countries. Moreover, that is how Dutch authors Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes (2006: 285) perceive transmigrants - as persons, who are at home in several different social worlds, speak several languages, participate in cross-border social networks and political movements, and sometimes make a living with transnational economic activities. The same authors are defining transnational activities as cross-border activities of an economic, political, or socio-cultural nature. They classify transnational activities aimed at the country of origin which would be money transfers, visits to, and political participation in the country of origin, and activities aimed at the host country such as cultural events with the artists from the country of origin, meetings that many compatriots attend, or mobilizing political support for parties or movements in the country of origin (Al-Ali et al., 2001, according to Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes, 2006: 289). However, transnational activities are not only reserved for the migrants – people on the move, but also for the family and friends of migrants who also contribute to and participate in diverse transnational activities.

Concerning theoretical roots of transnational perspective, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 598) listed four traditions developed among scholars: “the research done by sociologists and anthropologists in the United States, studies done by Transnational Community Programme based at Oxford University, a literature on transnational families, and an effort to reformulate notions of space and social structure”. Therefore, we could say that transnational perspective on migrations is invention of British and North American sociological and anthropological traditions. However, in the time of globalization which includes interconnection and spreading of scientific thoughts, and increased scientific interdisciplinarity, usage of transnational perspective is probably growing in the rest of social sciences’ orientations, at least those European.

There is also one more perception of transnational migrations and transnational migrants that seemed quite interesting and worth of thinking about. Joppke and Morawska (2003: 5) explain it in the context of the social movements of the 1960s and growing individualization that followed those events which destroyed the previous image of a homogeneous population in any given Western state. As they argue, “The new immigrant transnationalism was originally conceptualized as a strategy of resistance ‘from below’ by members of marginalized and underprivileged racial or

ethnic groups from (semi-)peripheral parts of the world against the hegemonic powers of the 'core' structures of white receiver societies. Immigrants and their offspring born in these societies escape the latter's control by engaging in transnational spaces (...)." (Joppke and Morawska, 2003: 26). No matter of how we name certain migrations and migrants in different historical periods, question of their assimilation, integration, or incorporation into host society is still inherent. All the authors that were cited in this essay by now were writing about those problems – some of them were using those concepts independently, while some were contextualizing them in transnational perspective. For example, one of the main research questions for Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes (2006) was what do transnational activities of modern transmigrants imply for their integration or incorporation into the Dutch society?. But before discussing concepts of assimilation, integration, incorporation, and inclusion in transnational context, we will shortly define them independently. However, to be able to understand them, we will firstly define ethnicity, or ethnic group. According to Alexander (1988: 84), ethnicity can be seen as the real or perceived primordial qualities prescribed to a group by virtue of shared racial, religious, linguistic, and other cultural characteristics, or by national origin, and similar components associated with a common territorial ancestry.

Joppke and Morawska (2003: 4) give us a brief insight into concepts of assimilation and integration, and according to them, notion of immigrant assimilation was coined during the first wave of industrial-age migration in the late nineteenth century. On example from the United States as the country which they write about, it meant that Germans there, as enemies in World War I, had to give up on preserving their own language, schools, and social habits in order to be accepted on the U.S. soil. On the other hand, integration is presented as more recent and gentler process where immigrants are not conceived as objects of manipulation and control but as subjects who are integrating by their free will, and where state can at best set the parameters, but never guarantee a specific result. Contemporary theorist of neofunctionalism Jeffrey Alexander defines assimilation "as the effort to achieve full institutional participation through identification with the primordial qualities of the core group" (1988: 95). However, he is quite critical towards modern states and their immigrant policies. Moreover, he claims that civil sphere and participation in it are very important for inclusion of immigrants in host societies. While criticizing today's policies of

immigrants' assimilation and inclusion, he writes that they provide for the members of out-groups a civil education, imparting to them the competences needed for participation in democratic and civil life. But unfortunately, they are not neither practiced nor understood in such universalistic way – they are always filtered through the primordialities of the core group. In conclusion, what people are learning is how to express civil competence in a different kind of primordial way (Alexander, 2001: 243). Concerning integration, there are few kinds of it. Namely, Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes (2006: 287) distinguish two types of integration – structural, and social and cultural one. Structural integration is social position of migrants in the host society, in terms of their level of education and position in the labor market, while social and cultural integration are informal social contacts of immigrants with native people and extent to which immigrants endorse the host society's prevailing moral standards and values. Empirical researches which they refer to (Dagevos, 2001; Odé, 2002) showed that these two types of integration are strongly related. In other words, migrants with higher levels of education and better work conditions had more informal contacts among native people in host society; in case of the mentioned research it was the Dutch one.

What Alexander (2001: 242) writes about incorporation is that it “points to the possibility of closing the gap between stigmatized categories of persons – persons whose particular identities have been relegated to the invisibility of private life – and the utopian promises that in principle regulate civil life, principles that imply equality, solidarity, and respect among members of society.” But it is not only present in the public space of social movements – it can be found on micro levels of society such as intermarriages, as well as on macro levels like labor markets. We will use Joppke's and Morawska's (2003: 3-4) overview of integration process in contemporary societies to close this discussion. Namely, closely to Bourdieu's and Luhmann's ideas, they give us picture of modern society as “a multiplicity of autonomous and interdependent fields or systems, which engage actors only in specific respects, never in their totality”. As modern societies do not have the centers, the notion of immigrant integration disappears from that kind of society, while the concern for inclusion takes on entirely new direction. Finally they write that “immigrants, much like everyone else, are always excluded and included at the same time, excluded as whole persons and included as sectoral players or agents with specific assets and habitual dispositions within specific fields or systems”. According to cited authors and their perspectives, we could say that

inclusion is perceived as sort of last step, as the indication of full acceptance into the host society. As usual, it is quite clear in theory and analytical usage, while in reality there are complex problems that cannot be solved linearly as they are sometimes presented.

In connection to previous part of the paper, it is important to mention the concepts of identity and identification. Steven Vertovec (2001: 573) also argues that those concepts go hand in hand with the notion of transnationalism because “many peoples’ transnational networks are grounded upon the perception that they share some form of common identity, often based upon a place of origin and the cultural and linguistic traits associated with it. Such networks are marked by patterns of communication or exchange of resources and information along with participation in socio-cultural and political activities”. In the context of our topic we will focus on ethnic identification, more specific on self-identification. According to that, ethnic identification can be seen as the extent to which people feel related to a particular ethnic group and orient themselves towards the norms and values of that group. It has a group dimension which can be described by question “To whom do I belong?” and a normative dimension which answers the question “Whose norms and values are important to me?” (Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes, 2006: 290-295).

Some of the authors (Portes et al., 1999; Morawska, 2003; Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes, 2006) whose works were used in this essay are arguing that transnational activities and processes of assimilation and integration are concurrent – that they are happening at the same time. In other words, migrants who are preserving culture and language of the country of their origin, while acquiring knowledge about and characteristics of the host country are perceived as successful ones. Question of parallel process of assimilation and integration into the host society, and living kind of described transnational life would be one of the main concerns of our future research. In the next part we will say more about its aims, research questions, planned methodology, and research sample.

3. Research aims and questions

As it is already written, topic will be transnational involvement and integration of people from former Yugoslavian countries in the area of Brno, Czech Republic. In that context focus will be put on self-identification of mentioned people. Precisely, we

will try to find out if they are identifying more with co-citizens in Czech Republic, or co-citizens in their home country, or maybe with the members of the same ethnic group in Czech Republic or any other area. Moreover, we will try to find out the level of transnational activities and its influence on the overall level of their integration into Czech society. Influence of structural characteristics such as educational level, material, social, and cultural capital on transnational activities and level of incorporation in society of immigration will also be researched.

Among above-written key aims of the research, we will try to define the structure of group of (trans)migrants from former Yugoslavia in Brno, examine their motives for moving to Brno, plans for the future such as learning Czech language, studying at Czech universities, or working after graduation, and in the frame of migration and transnationalism theories and previous researches try to analyze and anticipate future number and structure of groups of people coming from former Yugoslavia to live in Brno. There will also be examined potential differences between exchange students from former Yugoslavian countries and “permanent” migrants from there, as well as possible reinforcement of national identities while living in immigration.

According to everything written by now, research questions would be:

- How transnational involvement is manifested among the migrants from former Yugoslavia in Brno?
- What is the structure of their transnational activities? Are they more directed towards country of origin, or host country – Czech Republic?
- How structural and social integrations are manifested among the migrants from former Yugoslavia in Brno?
- What their transnational activities imply for the level of their integration into Czech society?

4. Research methodology and sample

The main research method will be semi-structured interview. Prepared interview questions will be used as directions of the talk between researcher and subjects of our research – informants. By that we will leave some space for opening new questions and topics that we were not thinking of while preparing for the interview. This kind of interview is the most appropriate for the topic of research because it allows us quite deep insight in the topic and possibility to understand and interpret given information in

the context of sociological theories. Besides that, we will try to participate in some of the events such as concerts, parties, or exhibitions organized by migrants in Brno. That could be chance to find out more useful information in less formal way, and finally to see by ourselves how some of the transnational activities look like “in live”.

The current plan is to have interview with approximately fifty informants. We do not personally know all of them, but the method of “snow ball” will be used for that purpose. In other words, at the end of each interview we will ask our informant to recommend us someone with similar life path – a person from one of former Yugoslavian countries who is living in Brno currently.

5. Conclusion

For the final word, we will briefly present current ideas and plans for the research, and some of the general expectations of it. Firstly, there is going to follow way more detailed literature review, especially of the research papers on similar topics that we could use as sort of background for expectation and conclusions. Afterwards, there will be set final research questions according to which there would be prepared interview questions. In the meantime we will try to contact as large as possible number of potential informants and ask them about participation in the research. Interviews will take us few weeks after which there will be made transcripts of them, and finally interpretation and writing of the research report will follow. Whole time we will be in contact with a professor who will be the mentor of our work on the master thesis.

Although we did not come up with any presumptions of the research, there are few of them which we thought of after reading literature cited in this essay. For example, immigrant communities with greater average economic resources and human capital such as educational level and professional skills should have higher levels of transnationalism because of their superior access to the infrastructure that makes these activities possible (Portes et al., 1999: 224). This statement could be applied on the previously mentioned research of immigrants’ lives in Dutch society. That research also showed that involvement in transnational activities did not diminish with increased length of stay in host country. Moreover, it showed that migrant groups that were poorly integrated into Dutch society were not more involved in transnational activities and had no stronger identifications with the countries of origin (Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes, 2006). Finally, as we think of the immigrants from former Yugoslavia as groups with

high level of transnational activities, and this was one of the motives for the research in the first place, we can assume that mentioned groups will characterize high level of integration in Czech society. However, research will show how correct are these presumptions.

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