

SOC585 MIGRATION AND TRANSNATIONALISM – MIGRATING PEOPLE, MIGRATING CULTURE: OPTICS, METHODS, AND IMPACTS (Fall 2013)

Final exam

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3. Discuss immigrant integration using the concepts of 'cultural armature' and 'city scale'. (8 points)

When we try to understand the processes that are accompanying migrants' incorporation to the host society, it is very important to pay the attention to all the issue's complexity, national immigration policies shouldn't be the only source for international comparison.¹ First of all, even though the certain level of generalization is needed, the most fruitful conclusions come from the research that is as specific and as locally anchored as possible. There are several conceptual tools that can help us to theorize this. To get a better understanding of migrant's experience (and indirectly also of host society's), sociologists should also aim to capture what is behind the officially declared or represented municipalities approaches towards migrants. As Jaworski et al. (2012) show on the case study of Portland and Danbury, United States, despite official declaration of city's openness towards newcomers, the everyday experience of diversity is influenced by more complex determinants than official policies. She brings our sociological attention to a) history and cultural geography of the city; b) its urban self-representation, 3) cultural responses to demography and 4) prevailing ethos towards immigrants demonstrated especially through municipal responses (2012:78). All these factors play role in shaping how "newcomers" and "old settlers" interact. The concept of cultural armature enables us to abstract from the structural level represented predominantly by immigration laws and include also respective cultural determinants. As such we can place the migrant's experience within the wider context of the city.

This is very important, because it is not only the states but also cities that significantly differ in their capacity to incorporate migrants. At the end of 20th century the theory of global cities (Sassen 1991) emerged with the aim to overcome the national perspective on cities and to show that when it comes to the capacity of addressing diversity, more similarities could be found between different global cities rather than between big and small cities in a particular country. However, partly also due to this similar patterns in global cities we shouldn't shrink our research interest only to them and try to reveal what is going on in other parts of the world as well. Glick-Schiller and Caglar (2009) call for the implementation of scalar approach to migration study. With this approach individual cities could be studied and their position understood without taking into account their size or belonging to the particular state as the only relevant factors. Within this perspective also less significant cities could be positioned to the imagined migration social field and compared globally as well as within various

¹ I use the term incorporation rather than widely used integration or inclusion as how Glick-Schiller and Caglar point out (2009), it is more politically neutral.

trajectories of power (Brenner 1999; Smith 1995 in Glick-Schiller and Caglar 2009). Proposed concept of the city scale is defined as "differential positioning of cities determined by the articulation of institutions of political, cultural and economic power within regions, states and the globe" (Glick-Schiller and Caglar 2009). Therefore, similarly to the abovementioned concept of the cultural armature of a city, culture, economics and politics are taken into account to provide better understanding of the city's particularities. Rather than differentiating between dichotomies like global-local, scalar approach opts for more flexible categories. According to city's ability to incorporate on social, political and also cultural level, Glick-Schiller and Caglar differentiate between top-scale, up-scale, low-scale and down scale cities. These labels however serve only for the conceptualization and comparison of cities and are not definite and static labels.

To apply theoretical concepts to the reality, we can discuss the case of Bratislava.² Despite having the experience of multicultural city from the beginning of 20th century, which should according to the theory of cultural armature favor the openness and hospitality to migrants, the current condition is rather contradictory and ethnocentric on all the levels. To understand this, we must take into account also the long communism period with all its closeness and cultural imperialism which, seemingly, over scribed the shared multicultural experience in the minds of the citizens of Bratislava. Difference is therefore something which is slowly becoming accepted, however is not a part of city marketing and is most definitely not cultivated or cherished. Regarding the structural conditions, Slovak immigration law is very restrictive which manifests itself also in the integration policies. The supportive services providing healthcare, education, law or social assistance are present, but often insufficient.

Migrants, especially those less educated and coming from third countries are employed mostly in blue collar sectors. I also assume that the labor market is discriminatory, if not openly, than secretly towards the foreigners. Currently we are conducting the qualitative research which should reveal the dynamics behind the employment of migrants.

Specific category is constituted by students, educated young professionals working for international companies and tourists, who add a bit of the cosmopolitan image to the city. These are however to the great extent just visitors or short-term dwellers who don't rely with their life strategies on the Bratislava's inclusiveness. Politically, the discourse is based on the othering and therefore ethnic minorities (mostly Hungarians and Roma) but also Ukrainians, Romanians or especially citizens of non-EU countries are viewed negatively as foreign elements. This doesn't apply to the so called western migrants whose presence in the city is perceived neutrally if not positively.

More precise positioning of Bratislava within the scale of urban places would of course require more precise and tailored-fit research, but all in all according to my opinion ,although Bratislava is probably most migrant friendly city in Slovakia, it is definitely not a top-scale or up-scale place to live when one does not speak the language, does not share Slovak cultural practices or differs in any significant way from the constructed "regular citizens of Bratislava".

² Following part of the answer is based on my experience of being local in Bratislava as well as on my expert knowledge acquired in The center for the ethnicity and culture research, where I work. However, as I rely on my perceptions and observations rather than on concrete data, I admit my conclusion might be biased.

GLICK SCHILLER, N. and CAGLAR, A. 2009. Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (2), pp. 177-202.

JAWORSKI, N. B. et al. 2012. New Perspectives on Immigrant Contexts of Reception: The Cultural Armature of Cities. *Nordic Journal of Migration Studies* 2 (1), pp. 78-88.

SASSEN, Susan. The global city: New York, London, Tokyo. 1991. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

5. “Methodological nationalism is a tendency to accept the nation-state and its boundaries as a given.” What are the consequences of this tendency in migration research? Provide examples. (8 points)

Methodological nationalism is a theoretical perspective that approaches the study of social phenomena as if it was contained within the borders of individual nation states (Beck 2000, Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). It reflects the ethno-emancipation moods of most of the 20th century and as such is very deeply inscribed in social sciences. As Wimmer and Glick-Schiller point out, “those nationalist forms of inclusion and exclusion that bind our societies together served as an invisible background even to the most sophisticated theorizing about the modern condition. The social sciences were captured by the apparent naturalness and givenness of a world divided into societies along the lines of nation-states” (2002:304).

When we take into consideration the nowadays increasingly interconnected world, this is especially problematic in the field of social research such as migration studies. The methodological nationalism tends to support the distinctions based on one’s belonging to a certain nation state and therefore also indirectly support and strengthen them. When applying the perspective of methodological nationalism migrants are always seen as those coming from outside. Simply, methodological nationalism is another way of making the imagined community called nation alive at the cost of what is now called global citizenship. Even though the national lens still has its relevance, mainly due to the strong historical and political contexts and significance of national legislatures, the social processes can't be understood in isolation from the wider global context. Despite increasing amount of scholarly work that calls for rethinking of this perspective, the migration dynamics is still more often than not observed through ethnic lenses. As such it often omits the links that influence and connect the migrants, but also population in general, with what lies outside of the borders of a particular nation state. The scholarly studies are being done on national level, written in national languages and international or even transnational perspective is often lacking.

To overcome methodological nationalism is a big challenge for social scientists. In the form of the so called container model of society it is still very much present not only in the science, but still also in the perception of one’s daily life. Transnationalism as a theoretical approach to migration studies appeared partly in order to help to overcome it. However, rather than a complex theory transnationalism offers just an additional theoretical perspective and its potential is not strong enough to change how we think about the world (Boccagni 2012). Therefore, what I aim to propose here is that rather than substituting one dogma with the other, methodological nationalism with transnationalism, we should aim to join them together. In order to overcome methodological nationalism in science but also in real life the transnational perspective should be taken into account as well, but these

two should be rather mutually supporting than exclusive. While combining the two approaches we have a better chance of acquiring a desired outcome- more adequate research data on migration and therefore also more precise and tailored made governmental policies.

BECK, U. (2000). The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity. *British Journal of Sociology*. 51(1), 79–105.

BOCCAGNI, P. 2012. "Rethinking transnational studies: Transnationalities and the transnationalism of everyday life." *European Journal of Social Theory*. 2012, 15: 117.

WIMMER, A. - GLICK-SCHILLER, N. 2002. „Methodological Nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social science“. *Global Networks* 2, 4 (2002) 301-334. Blackwell Publishing.

7. Discuss the relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism using the example of arts and museums. (8 points)

Museums are among the most influential institutions when it comes to the formation of one's sense of belonging and identity. They are the places where we come to get the sense of what we perceive to be the objective historical facts. However, it is rather the mixture of collective memories and artificially created representations of a particular community that is stored, kept but also created and recreated inside museum buildings. Therefore it is important to engage critically with the narratives that are being proposed by museum exhibitions. Whose is the memory that is being mediated? Is it ours? Is it theirs? Who is us and who is them? Who is excluded? Who is alienated? These questions are sometimes difficult to answer but taking into consideration the symbolical power museums have with all their ostentation over their spectators, it is important to address them.

Especially interesting is the case of so called National museums. Having the word "national" directly in their name, they tend to claim the monopoly on establishing what the nation is. As such they reflect the wider philosophies and narratives about who already belongs to the nation and who might potentially be able to join (Favell 2001 in Levitt 2012). Depending on the ideology they choose, they can either get inclusive and cosmopolitan or rather discriminatory and nationalistic (and of course, anything that is in between). Levitt (2012) discusses in her article the two cases of Danish and Swedish museums and shows how in the first case the diversity is showcased as alien in order to strengthen the idea of what Danishness means, and in the second as a constitutive element of what does it mean to be a Swede.

We can reasonably suggest that with increasing globalization and migration the importance of inclusive cosmopolitan museum rises. However, such museums need first of all the building blocks in form of a cosmopolitan memory. According to Levy and Sznajder, it is a sort of memory that transcends the borders of a nation state, and "focuses on the simultaneity of universal and particular outlooks. Rather than presuppose the congruity of nation, territory and polity, cosmopolitanized memories are based on and contribute to nation- transcending idioms, spanning territorial and national borders" (2010:6). They claim that reflecting the globalization processes such a memory is emerging, that "we

are witnessing a process in which 'national and ethnic memories continue to exist' but they are subjected to a common patterning. They begin to develop in accord with common rhythms and periodization. But in each case, the common elements combine with pre-existing elements to form something new... the result is always distinctive (Levy and Sznajder 2002: 89 in Macdonald 2013). The most telling example of this process is a globalization of a holocaust memory which recently departed from the notion of once in a history catastrophe with its aggressors and victims and rather becomes a universal story about the evil and the good to be remembered across different nations (Macdonald 2013). Therefore museumification of the holocaust becomes a typical case of what cosmopolitanism in museum practice means.

Last but not least, we should pay attention to the concepts of hegemony, power and politics. Despite current trends towards widely shared meta-narratives, we can't omit memory politics casted upon the institutions by those who make decisions. Museums are typical examples; they can very easily be politicized. As also Levitt (2012) notes, the structural determinants such as e.g. political interventions, funding or simply visitor's interest and demand shape the content of museum exhibits to the great extent.

LEVITT, Peggy. 2012. "The bog and the Beast: Museums, the Nation, and the Globe." *Ethnologia Scandinavica*. 42: 29-46. Web. 14 Jan. 2014.

LEVY, D., SZNAIDER, N. *Human Rights and Memory*. 2010. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

MCDONALD, Sharon. "Cosmopolitan Memory Holocaust Commemoration and National Identity" In Macdonald, S. *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*. 2013 ,pp. 188- 215.