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# TRANSCENDING POVERTY AND DISEMPOWERMENT: (FORCED) MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION INTO SOCIETIES

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## Abstract

*Quicker flows of products are characteristic for the globalisation era, however, they are not always accompanied by the free movement of people. The latter is a human right, however, it is not granted to everybody, but seems to be economically and class based. In the article I will be interested in who are those who can travel and what are the effective ways of integration. The answer will be sought also in transnational theories. The hypothesis of the article is that the assimilation does not harm only migrants, but also the state since the assimilation does not approach to the migrants as to the social, economic and cultural capital. Besides, the integration strategies encourage heterogenisation of cultures, thus they help to preserve cultures and prevent melting of cultures into one global culture.*

## Izvleček

*Za obdobje globalizacije je značilen večji pretok proizvodov, ki pa mu ne sledi vedno tudi bolj prost pretok ljudi. Človekova pravica svobodnega gibanja namreč ni zagotovljena vsem, pogosto je ekonomsko in razredno pogojena. V članku se sprašujem, kdo so tisti, ki lahko potujejo in kakšne so poti učinkovite integraci-*

*je. Odgovore iščem tudi v transnacionalnih teorijah. V članku izhajam iz hipoteze, da asimilacija ne povzroča škode zgolj migrantom, temveč tudi državam, saj k njim v primeru asimilacije te ne pristopajo kot k socialnemu, h kulturnemu in k ekonomskemu kapitalu; medtem ko integracijske strategije omogočajo heterogenizacijo kultur, saj pomagajo ohranjati kulture in na ta način preprečujejo njihovo stapljanje v eno globalno kulturo.*

## Introduction

As I found out in the previous research, the economic integration of forced and economic migrants is a precondition of all other integrations (the sociocultural, political, legal and the psychological integration) as it leaves the migrants the liberty to choose the paths of inclusion into receiving societies. By integration processes I mean the cultural and social processes that occur between the culture of migrants and usually the mainstream culture(s) of the receiving society. Integration implies that the culture of newcomers to the society can be practiced in the public sphere.

However, it is a well-known fact of the globalisation era that the divide between richer and poorer is becoming wider and wider. One of the reasons is the centralization of resources and powers that is characteristic for global and local levels (cf. to Bauman 2002). As the interdisciplinary research on post-socialist transformation shows, the centralization of resources is typical for Southeastern European region and some surrounding countries as well. Unequal access to resources is therefore characteristic for globalisation processes. As regards migration this results in the fact that there are some who can travel freely and the Others to whom the human right freedom of movement is not granted or at least not to equal extent.

But it is not only the economic standard on which it depends



who can travel freely or not; another important factor is also the membership in the social class to which a migrant belongs to. Therefore I will try to answer in this presentation the question: who are those who can migrate and who are those who cannot migrate. The answer will be sought also with the help of transnational theories since the question that I posed could be at least partially answered by this contemporary theoretical framework that emerged in the nineties in migration studies. However, I will try to problematize some of those results. Further on, I will try to answer the question what are the effective paths of integration of forced and economic migrants into receiving societies.

Namely, in spite of the fact that the assimilation policies are out of the question since the end of sixties worldwide and the importance of integration policies is emphasized since the beginning of the seventies, it is a fact that many contemporary strategies of inclusion of forced and economic migrants still lead to assimilation. It is my assumption that the assimilation policies do not cause human costs only to migrants since they disempower them, but they result in costs also for the states, because with the assimilation policies the states do not take advantage of migrants' economic, social and cultural capital that they bring to the receiving societies. The integration policies therefore represent an important part of contemporary migration management that enables the states to regain later their investments for implementing integration policies.

## *To Whom is Freedom of Movement Granted in the Contemporary World?*

It is widely known globalisation fact that the quicker flow of capital is in the period of late capitalism characteristic of societies more than in previous historical epochs. However, the more free flow of capital is not always accompanied with the free movement of people. The poorest are very often the ones that do not migrate, because the travel always depends on funds. Even the refugees cannot escape if they do not have some funds. For example, the forcibly replaced from Bosnia-Herzegovina who scattered around the world were the ones who had some funds for travel and often also for some time to survive. Many of those who did not have some savings at the time of atrocities were not able to go to exile at all. Similar was the situation of forced migrants from Kosovo.

It is the same with the economic migrants who sometimes use savings of many family members so that they are able to travel to foreign country. Those are usually also the ones that send remittances back home if they are able to reach the foreign country at all. Thus they contribute to the economic development in the country of origin. Sometimes they also cooperate in the projects with the state of origin. Namely, the South-eastern European region as well as many other parts of the world face the increased number of undocumented migrants that travel illegally and pay large amounts of money in order to be

smuggled into the desired states. The countries of our region are for migrants usually just the transit routes to European Union with the exception of Greece who changed from the country of origin to destination country. The ideas of building the collective centres for migrants outside the European Union as for example, in Croatia, serve to guard the European Union door from those who are excluded from freedom of movement.

The undocumented migrants usually come from the poorer social strata who are unable to get visas since visa regimes are becoming stricter, especially from the nineties on. But for whom are visa regimes stricter? Definitely not for intellectuals who represent the privileged elite especially as regards the freedom of movement. As an intellectual it is not difficult to get visas from various states, one just contacts the fellow researchers or fellow writers to send the invitation letter and the visa is here. Another group of people that can travel freely are those professional profiles of migrants that are needed in the receiving societies. Namely some societies already have programmes for inclusion of migrants such as Hungary, Ireland, Germany, for example. Those programmes for inclusion of migrants are targeted according to the needs of the receiving states. People who are not intellectuals and people who cannot be included into the scope of those states' migrant inclusion programmes are the ones that are left with less freedom of movement. Some European union countries have certain programmes to include some vulnerable groups, but that holds true mainly for the forcibly displaced. The existence of the small number of such programmes unfortunately does not guarantee that one can easily get asylum if one is forcibly displaced and belongs to a vulnerable group. There is no such guarantee especially from the nineties on since the world faces the erosion of forced migrants' rights.

The undocumented migrants are also the ones with the least labour rights (cf. to Ong 1999); therefore, they often belong to the most exploited social strata. Intellectuals as a rule have more rights at work at home and in the foreign state if they decide to migrate. Therefore, many intellectuals decide to move to another country, sometimes permanently sometimes temporarily. For example, the permanent migration in the form of the brain drain is not something new that occurred in the new millennium but occurred often also in the past. The phenomenon that is relatively new is, the so-called, transnationalism, which is characteristic for people who decide to live in two countries. Namely, many usually more educated people or other needed profiles decide to seek additional funds in another country. Those people are usually called transmigrants which denotes that they are travelling between the state of origin and the receiving state. Very often people who live transnational lives become bicultural. According to the Portes' definition of transnationalism we can speak about transnational phenomena if migrants travel frequently between state of origin and the receiving state (1999).

Hannerz writes that transnationalism is a new way of cosmopolitanism. It is his opinion that transnational cultures tend to be more or less clear cut occupational cultures which are often tied to transnational job markets (1996). He speaks about



transnational culture of intellectuals, bureaucrats, politicians, diplomats, business people etc. For them migrating is easiest since they possess usually a lot of symbolic capital and have numerous networks of contacts that provide them with information. According to Portes those transnational cultures belong to transnationalism from above, however, economically the poorest belong to transnationalism from below (1999).

Those new spaces created by bicultural individuals are called transnational spaces by Faist (2000) and the zones of new sovereignty by Ong (1999). As a rule they are explained in transnational theories as liberating zones that enable transnational individuals to gain new funds. However, usually the economic gains are accompanied by social and psychological freedom as people who get integrated into two countries have the opportunity to avoid the oppressiveness of institutional structures in the countries of origin at least to certain extent. As much as this escape routes are definitely beneficial for migrants who have economic, social, psychological and cultural gains, the freedom they offer should, nevertheless, be questioned as well. Namely, transnational spaces have many things in common with national spaces. For example, the fact that they are not free from competition for resources between individuals and institutions. Besides, we cannot simply idealize the transnational spaces and call them safe haven if I use the Ong's term (1999) because they are not free of human evil. Namely, human freedom is not only the result of societal organization and political institutions but also a question of human nature of people who inhabit those places; therefore transnational spaces vary and are not always exempt of social exclusion.

People who live in transnational spaces get integrated into the receiving society and stay integrated into the society of origin as well. However, the degree to which migrants get integrated in each of the societies varies according to the individuals. Namely, authors who research transnationalism write that especially male seek more contacts with the state of origin since they usually have higher social status there. Women tend to be more willing to integrate into the receiving state, as their primary focus is the family. The family and the activities connected to it function also as the adaptation mechanism to the receiving society. Therefore it is plenty of evidence that the experience of integration is very often gendered. Such is the case also of some transmigrants from the region as, for example, the Croat migrants who live between Croatia and Germany as shown by the results of Jana Čapo-Žmegač.<sup>1</sup> According to her research the males wish to return home and live only in the society of origin to larger extent than women. I noticed some similar trends among Slovenian migrants who live in Slovenia and Germany.

## *Effective Integration of Migrants into Societies*

Transnational phenomena seem to be a relatively new phenomena. The beginners of transnational theories Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton (1992) explained the need for

developing new theoretical framework for explaining contemporary phenomena because they noticed the changed social realities of migrants. The researchers noticed that before the Second World War migrants did not live in two societies to such an extent, the technological revolution with the cheaper access to travel enabled migrants to maintain more ties with the society of origin. However, dual citizenship seems to be an important precondition for effective integration of transnational individuals into society of origin and the receiving society, as other legal statuses tend to exclude in certain segments of a society. In cases that the states allow only one citizenship, migrants tend to integrate more in the state in which they retained citizenship very often also in order to retain the possibilities to inherit. Such is the case of Croat migrants in Germany, for example. I found out increasing awareness of importance of dual citizenship among the authors of transnational theories. Luckily, the idea of dual citizenship is included in the proposal for the new constitution of the European Union and that would encourage the possibilities of dual citizenship in the South-eastern European region as well.

However, it is easier for the economic migrants to live in transnational spaces than for the refugees. Namely, it is characteristic for the latter that they fled their state because they were persecuted and their life was in danger. Besides, refugees according to the Geneva Convention are not allowed to return to their state of origin during their legal refugee status. They therefore depend on the integration conditions of the receiving state only. However, the contemporary erosion of refugee protection often results in the fact that they can not effectively integrate into a receiving society and are often left in limbo and live between and betwixt the two states, although they managed to come to exile. Those who could not have had the chances to escape into exile at all belong to the social strata that cannot move freely. Refugees who cannot escape live as Auge say in non-liex, in no places, Bauman (2000) says they somehow loose the place on earth.

It is often emphasized in the integration literature that the integration starts at the reception. The quality of life of refugees to a very large extent depends on the reception conditions, the same is true for the economic migrants as the conditions at their arrival and their legal status determine their integration path to a large extent. Only citizenship grants full rights of migrants as it allows also for political participation, other legal statuses discriminate in certain segments of society. As I already mentioned at the beginning, we cannot speak about effective integration without the possibilities of economic integration. The effectiveness of integration could partially be measured statistically, beside participation in labour market; important indicators are also participation in education, the public health sector, social security, voting system etc. If we take into consideration migrants' perspective, we can speak about effective integration without taking the emic approach and assess their feelings of being integrated or not. From the

<sup>1</sup> According to her lecture at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana, April 17, 2003.