

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH ON MIGRATION, MOBILITY AND TRANSNATIONALISM BETWEEN THE BALKANS AND EU MEMBERS STATES

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***Introduction.*** We are living in “the age of migration” – this title of a publication of Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller (1993) suggests that the rise of international migration is one of the most important phenomena of the latter 20th and early 21st century. During the last five decades, the amount of international migration has grown enormously, from 82 million in 1975 to 175 million in the year 2000 and 232 million in 2013, which represents 3 % of the world’s population.

Socio-cultural transnational activities cover a wide array of social and cultural transactions through which ideas and meanings are exchanged. Recent researches have established the concept and importance of social remittances which provide a distinct form of social capital between migrants living abroad and those who remain at home [Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, 301]. There are often a combination of factors, which may play out differently for women and men. Gender roles, relations and inequalities affect who migrates and the impacts on migrants themselves, as well as on sending and receiving areas. Migration can provide new opportunities to improve women’s lives and change oppressive gender relations – even displacement as a result of conflict can lead to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities to women’s benefit. However, migration can also entrench traditional roles and inequalities and expose women to new vulnerabilities as the result of precarious legal status, exclusion and isolation.

***Methodology.*** While some argue that the “virtual” world is a different “social space” than the “real world,” some ethnographers argue that there is one social world which contains both traditional and technologically advanced modes of communication and sites of social activity [Vertovec, 2004, 3]. “Virtual reality” is not a reality separate from other aspects of human action and experience, but rather a part of it. Therefore, ethnographers should define the field or setting of their research on the basis of their research topic, rather than arbitrarily or prematurely excluding one arena or the other. The ethnographic research reveals a variety of approaches to how the setting of online research is defined. Migration can provide a vital source of income for migrant women and their families, and earn them greater autonomy, self-confidence and social status. At the same time, women migrants, especially if they are irregular migrants, can face stigma and discrimination at every stage of the migration cycle. Before departure, women can be faced with gender-biased procedures and corrupt agents. In fact, gender

discrimination, poverty and violence, can provide the impetus for women to migrate or enable women to be trafficked in the first place. During transit and at their destination women can be faced with verbal, physical and sexual abuse, poor housing and encampments, sex-segregated labour markets, low wages, long working hours, insecure contracts and precarious legal status. And upon return to the source country they may be faced with broken families, illness and poverty.

**Literature review.** Scholars define stages of the migration process in which the incorporation of a gender perspective is essential [Vásquez & Marquardt, 2003]. The first, the pre-migration stage, includes factors such as gender relations and hierarchy and roles of men and women in their own country. The second, crossing the border, refers to migration policies in countries of origin and destination - which can affect differently the migration of men and women, migration strategies, occupations and stereotypical images of male and female roles and the potential entry of women in the receiver labour market. Finally, the post-migration stage, deals with the impact of women in a given flow, the labour market and the receptor status of the roles in the family and at home.

According to a typology proposed by Mauricio Ambrosini, “circulatory transnationalism”, based on the continuous movement through the borders, between the sending and receiving countries, but also within the latter one, and towards other countries, goes along with a “connective transnationalism” The last two models identified by Ambrosini are the “mercantile transnationalism”, based on the circulation of the commodities, and the “symbolic transnationalism”, focusing the repertoires of cultural consumption and representation of identities (national, ethnic, religious, and so on). Among the most significant studies in this area we consider particularly valuable the analysis conducted by C. Brettell (2006, 327-34), A. Çağlar (2001, 601-13), S. Castles (2002, 1143-68, J. Dahinden (2010, 51-71, T. Faist (2000, 189 – 222), N. Glick Schiller (2010, pp. 109-129), E. Morawska (2001, pp. 175-212), and others. The migration champion of Europe- the Balkans- gained this reputation in the beginning of the 1990s. This period was characterised by rather contradictory trends in the Eastern and Western sub-regions. Scholars are differencing three periods after the fall the Berlin Wall of migrations from the Balkan: The first period is from 1989 to the mid-1990s which also mark the end of the wars in former Yugoslavia, the second period started after the Dayton Agreement of 1995 in the first decade of the new century with the EU accession of Romania and Bulgaria (2007) and the third period when European integration is already reality, forthcoming or pending for the whole region. The first period is characterized by the sudden and huge increase of the migration flows, considerable increase of the intensity of labor and non-labor migration and literal “flight” of the Western and Eastern Balkans towards two opposed migration poles. The second period has two characteristic trends- transition to post-conflict migration flows on the Western Balkans and gradual and slow Europeanization

of the migrant on the Eastern Balkans. The third period is characterized with a labour migration which gradually occupies a central position as the main source of the migration. Balkan migration flows may be divided into two large groups: 1) “Non-labor” (trafficking, retirement or asylum) and 2) “labr migration” (emigration, including curricular migration and the free movement of people and immigration, return, including that of representative of Diaspora). Non-labor migration is extremely heterogeneous [Pries., 2007, 34], while some retired migrants start their own business.

Labor migration has stable traditions on the Balkans, where it is referred to by the word “gurbet”, “pechalbarstvo” etc. It is among the most stable sources of labour migration in Europe. The most targeted destination for the migrants are Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, UK, Sweden, Greece etc.

**Scientific novelty.** Despite the problems of terminology, the transnational approach is very fruitful for conceptualizing not only the migration history of the Balkans but also the overall history of the region. This does not mean that all social phenomena should be conceived as transnational, or even that there was anything “transnational” before the nation was invented. Socio-cultural transnational activities cover a wide array of social and cultural transactions through which ideas and meanings are exchanged. Recent research has established the concept and importance of social remittances which provide a distinct form of social capital between migrants living abroad and those who remain at home. These transfers of socio-cultural meanings and practices occur either during the increased number of visits that immigrants take back to their home countries or visits made by non-migrants to friends and families living in the receiving countries or through the dramatically increased forms of correspondence. The profile of the Balkan’s labor migrant unfolds in the wide expanse between the two poles- so called “euro- plumbers” and “euro-stars”. The jobs of the first group often fall under the term “3D”- Difficult, Dirty and Dangerous. Migrants from the Balkans are typical reflection of dual labor market theory according to which there are sectors which are not attractive for the locals and are being filled by foreign workforce. In this case the sectors are construction, tourism, hospitality, domestic help, care for elderly etc. To the second category of migrants has been given a different label: “brain drain”. This category of migrants is at the center of political and academic discourse in all countries [Morawska, 2001, 75]. “Brain drain” is a serious curse for fragile economies because it disempowers the most highly qualified and innovative segment of the workforce. Labor migration today is central to all national migration models in the Balkans in relation to all flows.

**Analysis.** In recent years, migratory movements have become an issue which has been studied by diverse scholarly disciplines and approaches [Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004]. Social and Cultural Anthropology with their specific methods have also significant contribution to theoretical issues about mobility and migrations. While macro

approaches focus on the stream of population, political and economic restrictions and possibilities of influence over migrations, anthropologists direct the attention to the micro- and mezzo-level of analysis, where the family and household are among the main units of analysis. According to anthropologist migration is an important part of livelihood strategies followed by the households in order to distribute and manage the income risks. It is a strategic choice of combination of activities by families and their members to maintain, secure, and improve their livelihoods and invest in education or business activities. These conceptions are popular in anthropological studies and actually allow viewing migrations beyond the theories that conceptualize migrants as passive actors subordinated to cost-benefit calculations or pushed and pulled by different factors (salaries, work places etc.). Household centered migration theories construct household as an entity with clear plans, strategies and aims, one that makes unanimous decision based on equality of power and commonality of interest among household members. Migration theories can be classified according to the level they focus on. Micro-level theories focus on individual migration decisions, whereas macro-level theories look at aggregate migration trends and explain these trends with macro-level explanations [Guarnizo, 2003, 1211]. The meso-level is in between the micro and macro level, e.g. on the household or community level and can explain both causes and perpetuation of migration. Taking on account the transnationalism literature, four primary challenges on researching of transnationalism can be identified: First, instead of expanding the notion of transnationalism to a new catch-all concept, and of 'viewing transnational relations in any corner', it is necessary to *define appropriate units of analysis for transnational societal phenomena*. The simplest transnational societal unit of analysis could be a 'transnational social relation', like the communication and interchange between a migrant and his or her family abroad. In order to use the transnationalism concept in a more precise manner, transnational studies should focus not on transnational relations in general, but on transnational *societal units* as relatively dense and durable configurations of transnational social practices, symbols and artefacts. To this end, it is necessary to explicitly define the specific relation between the (transnational) *units of analysis*, the (local, national, regional or global) *units of reference* and the (micro, meso or macro) *units of research*; these components characterize the transnational perspective and distinguish it from a global or simply comparative point of view. A second task identified by the scholars of transnational studies is *empirical transnationalism*: the need to measure the *real empirical extent* of transnational social phenomena and especially of durable and dense *transnational societal units*. On the one hand, the multifaceted and ubiquitous existence of transnational social *phenomena* and *relations* is a direct result of building socio-geographic container units such as nations, states and societies - and in this broader sense transnational relation are recognized as commonplace in transnational studies. On the other hand, transnational *social* or *societal spaces*<sup>3</sup> could also be

conceptualized in a narrow sense. A third challenge pointed out by transnationalism studies is to analyze the *internal structures and processes* of such transnational societal units as well as the *interrelation between transnational and non-transnational types of societal units of analysis*. As a fourth *desideratum* of current transnationalism studies, there still remains the need for developing an adequate methodology and satisfactory methods for transnational research. Scholars defined some excellent general rules for transnationalism studies, such as the famous ‘followings’ (follow the people, follow the thing/commodity chain, follow the metaphors, follow the plot/story/allegory, follow the life/biography, and follow the conflict). An important element in the changing gender specifics of the migratory flows is the tendency for the females to migrate individually. Aiming at finding employment, they migrate without accompanying males often as heads of families. The potential positive role of migration for women’s emancipation and empowerment has, however, its ‘downside’, which deserves attention. Female migrants remain more vulnerable towards the migration risks as they are exposed to a greater extent than men with respect to violent labour and sexual exploitation, unfavorable working conditions and low pay.

**Conclusion.** Gender issues and gender standpoints occupy a central place in analyses of contemporary migration dynamics. It is true that the initial interest of migration literature that brought gender at the forefront has been a sort of “rectification” of a historic injustice. Going further beyond the initial perception of female migrants as followers of their husbands through family reunification and as keepers and “transmitters” of tradition and cultural identity of the country of origin to the children by focusing on daily life and culture, women migrants have been largely reinvented, revisited and reconfigured. Gender has embedded itself in social research and theory not just as a significant factor but as an essential part of any social dynamics. Migration seems to be gendered; migration studies as well. Nevertheless, the ways gender is perceived and used analytically remains an open question. As far as digital networks are concerned, definitions seem to be more problematic and need to be further theorized, in particular when they intersect with migrant social networks. In fact, the term “network” as well as the term “digital” could easily be characterized as “fuzzy buzzwords”, since they are often used, abused, and misused, reaching to a point that they “mean everything and at the same time nothing”.

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During the past decades, globalization has come within the purview of anthropology. Today, migration, mobility and the social groups they produce – refugees, tourists, labour migrants – are on anthropology's research agenda. Increasingly, anthropologists study the cultural effects of the worldwide diffusion of commodities, technologies and media products, as new communication and transportation technologies bridge huge distances in ever briefer intervals of time, and release people from geographically restricted communities of interaction. Cultural artefacts – not just material things but also political ideas, scientific knowledge, images of the future and interpretations of the past – travel further and more swiftly than ever before. They are available simultaneously almost everywhere. However, their accessibility is restricted to those social actors who have the economic means or the cultural capital to make use of them.