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EXTREME DIGITAL PUSH IN A WORLD CHANGED BY COVID-19: EXPERIENCES AND REFLECTIONS ON DOING SOCIAL RESEARCH ONLINE

Dragana Kovačević Bielicki and Astrea Pejović

Introduction. The Extreme Digital Push

The popularity of, and the need for using online-based methods in social research has been constantly rising over the last several decades. The world wide web has become impossible to avoid when approaching and discussing any modern-day phenomena in contemporary human societies. It has also established itself as one of the most interesting and important platforms to research on, and about. Even when the cyberspace(s) and the new technologies that create and maintain them are not the direct object and focus of social research, they are both the arenas and tools which the majority of social researchers have to operate in, and with. The push towards the digital today applies all researchers, in all fields, up to a certain extent: in order to remain current and well informed about the world around us, in order to prepare and familiarize ourselves enough with specific topics and fields that we research, in order to contact interlocutors and maintain contact with them, and for numerous other, highly relevant purposes. This is why Jordan Kraemer (2016: 14) pointed out: "Our research methods must now contend with the reality that digital, networked technologies are integral to daily life both for scholars and the worlds, peoples, and places we study".

While these rapid transformations towards increased digitalization were already ongoing and continuously accelerating, what we in this working paper label as *the extreme digital push* was as unimaginable beforehand as it seemed inevitable and logical once the new reality took over in this current year (2020). By the extreme digital push, we specifically refer to the changes brought by the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic: As state of emergency was proclaimed from city to city, region to region, and countries closed their borders, the majority of people had to close in their private spaces to the highest possible extent and continue to lead a large part of their private and professional lives online. Suddenly, the extreme digital push applied to all and any aspects of our lives, private relations, work, higher education and research. The lockdown policies introduced

by the majority of the countries disabled the usual functioning in the physical spaces that surround us. They have also disabled travel and even the simplest of interactions. Arguably, many of the changes the strange Spring 2020 brought about are here to stay in the future (post-Covid-19) world that still seems remote and uncertain.

Social sciences and humanities researchers and teachers were certainly no exception to this abrupt push to (at least temporarily) adapt and fully "convert" mediated remote methods. No matter whether we thought of ourselves as digital researchers or traditional researchers before, after the Covid-19 push, it is hard to contest that online research has become an integral part of any social research.

From everything the two authors of this paper experienced and reflected on redently, we argue that the place of digital methodologies has become quite central in social research. The main question that inspired this paper was: After Covid-19 and the extreme digital push, do social researchers need to seriously re-think what the role and future of digital methodologies in research today in order to be able to adapt to the sudden pushes as the one we are experiencing at the moment? Like countless other social researchers around the globe, the two of us found ourselves caught and affected by this unprecedented situation, both personally and professionally: It seemed that any direct, physical fieldwork for our ongoing projects was blocked as an option for many months, and as time in the lockdown passed, this was proven true.

As visiting researchers, with ongoing small-scale individual projects at the Institute for Advanced Studies Kőszeg in Hungary during Spring 2020, we both had our project timelines planned well ahead of time, as well as a set deadline for conducting our proposed field projects and analysis. By the end of June 2020, when our funding and guest research status has ended, this was to be completed. Astrea started her fellowship in September 2019, and Dragana in February 2020, thus the projects were of different scales and in different phases in March 2020. This directly affects the fact that our respective projects ended up being re-envisioned in different ways, as will be explained in detail when we present the projects separately. Nevertheless, both of our main fieldworks were forthcoming at the time, we both planned to use face-to-face meetings and conversations and participant observation during Spring 2020 as the main methods for obtaining the relevant material we were after. We both immediately realized, like so many others in our position, that what we had to do was go "fully" online with our approaches in order to complete

the new adapted versions of our research projects by the end of our stay in Kőszeg. In order to do so in a responsible way that would still stay true to the main proposed topics we received funding for, we first had to make ourselves more familiar with the specific literature on online research methods and re-envision not only our empirical but also our theoretical approaches, so as to cope better with the new reality.

This working paper is the written result of our ongoing cooperation, directly caused and influenced by Covid-19 and the extreme digital push. The aim of the discussions we started originally was to cope better with the challenges presented to ourselves and our projects during the tumultuous Spring 2020. However, the discussions resulted in a close cooperation and discovery of much common ground, more than enough to co-author this paper and keep the discussion going in future. The paper is thus mainly the product of:

a)
Continuous discussions between the Astrea and Dragana, occasionally joined by other colleagues both from iASK and outside, about the future of social research, anthropology in particular, with the focus on boundaries between online and offline methods and the future of social research.

b)
A reading group we formed to educated ourselves about the field of online research methods in general and online ethnography and the podcast Twenty-first Century Armchair Anthropology we started together.

The main argument we propose in this working paper, is that the sharp division between online and offline is impossible to make in the contemporary world as our lives are constantly in-between the two realities. We take the Covid-19 lockdown as a temporal exception that, however, globally exposed the overlaps of online and offline that are otherwise often neglected. We argue for this claim both through the literature review of works on digital research that preceded ours in this field, and through showing how our own empirical projects had to be redesigned and how they will unfold in the future. We found that the sharp division between online and offline social research is in particular not defendable if posited as reified, absolute and clear. While it does in many ways make a difference whether physical, in-person research is available or not, which we will reflect on in detail, many of the spaces we research on and

methods we use to approach them are liminal, not clearly on- or offline. Our above listed arguments will be illustrated by concrete empirical examples from our research projects in this paper.

The paper has the following structure:

In this introductory section, we contextualized our main topic, explain the socio-political context that led us to formulate the arguments presented here and introduce its structure.

In the second section we present the review of the relevant literature on online research methods that helped us adapt and theoretically frame the changes of our research projects. The literature review is to a large extent the direct product of our work in this group and on the podcast Twenty-first Century Armchair Anthropology.

In the main section we present separately our two individual research projects as case studies, first in the form in which they were envisioned before Covid-19, then by detailing the concrete changes each of us introduced, explaining the reasons for introducing them. Throughout the redesign of our projects we continuously posed the question which of these adaptations were common to both of our projects and potentially many other projects out there, and which were specific to the topic and approach of our concrete research projects. This reflection is partially related to our own positionalities, but ultimately intended to start a wider discussion in future on how positionality in general significantly influences both online and offline social research. Inclusion of this type of reflection is important because personal and professional selves, class and other types of group belonging, as well as geographical locations individual social researchers inhabit was one of the important factors affecting the adaptations that different researchers had to make.

In the final section we return to our arguments and draw concrete conclusions that support our initial claims and arguments. Based on these conclusions, our thoughts on recommendations for future research in our field will be drawn, mostly through the reflection on concrete challenges, advantages and disadvantages of doing online research, including the ethical aspects and the challenges of research that take place predominantly online.

I. Literature Review: Is all ethnography today digital?

Digital technologies contributed to the creation of a new world that is not, in any sense, clearly separate from the physical world, either today or as it existed before the digital revolution. The digital world, moreover, became an extension that enabled new and faster ways of communication, expression, consumption, activism, and many other human practices. Even though the digital world is inhabited and generated by digital technologies, it is still designed by and for humans.

The digital revolution already began in the 1980s. Still, social sciences and humanities in their theorization of the changing world often seem adamant to strictly (re)create the online and offline division, reluctant to embrace the ambiguities and blurred boundaries of the changing world at the theoretical and disciplinary level, while certainly forced to engage with such ambiguities at the level of the empirical research. While digital technologies were interwoven with our everyday life to the extent that we cannot claim with certainty what is analog/offline and what is digital/online these days, social sciences and humanities keep classifying digital as something separate. That is how there are more and more specialized MA programs in digital anthropology, digital sociology, digital humanities, and handbooks in digital politics. Also, the traditional social scientific methods were prefixed with digital, so, often we have digital ethnography taught as separate from the classical ethnographic method. While it is useful to observe why and how digital technologies influence everyday life, a question arises, is there anything in the world today that is not influenced by the processes of digitalization? Is there any social science or method that is not at the same time digital, simply because it is exercised in the 21st century?

Digital technologies and the worlds around them are made of zeroes and ones, yet they are not beyond everyday experience. They exist through a matrix of actors and technologies that make them real. Miller (2018) reminds us that "the digital is not an abstraction but rather the creation of a plethora of quite concrete forms and processes." Sarah Pink (2016), in that sense, asserts that when we thematize the digital in social sciences, we need to recognize the incapacity to draw the border between digital and non-digital and instead, she proposes that we should talk about "the contemporary". For her, what we often tend to call digital ethnography is not something

separate from traditional ethnography, but a contemporary upgrade of the classical method in the world we currently inhabit. Keeping in mind that digital technologies are inseparable from everyday life, digital ethnography should be understood as the method that looks into every day in the 21st century (Pink et al.: 2016). In that sense, Miller (2018), again, underlines that there is no clear line between the world before digital technologies and the world that grew with them as there are numerous digital practices that have continuity with certain offline practices. Cooking blogs, or anarchist free libraries, for example, cannot be observed as something disconnected from cooking in kitchens or going to public libraries, respectively.

The most useful way to think about digital ethnography is to observe it as twofold. On the one hand, we can talk about the ethnography of the specifically digital phenomena, and on the other hand, we can talk about the use of digital technologies and digital spaces as part of more substantial ethnographic research. Digital technologies generated the worlds that without the technological aspect, would not be possible. By these worlds, we consider the communities that gather around practices exclusively connected to digital technologies. In the majority of the cases, these communities realize themselves in different practices and commodities on the internet. Researches that particularly analyze this aspect are manifold. *Jörgen* Rahm-*Skågeby* from Stockholm University, for example, researched an online community of the "Soulseek" users. "Soulseek" is a peer-to-peer (P2P) network for the free exchange of music among its users, consisting of an application that has to be installed on the users' computer and a network that one joins. Rahm-*Skågeby undertook a completely online ethnography; he participated in the network as a user and communicated with other users via online channels. For him, digital ethnography is online ethnography - "a qualitative approach for data collection in virtual communities"* (Skågeby 2011: 411). Rahm-*Skågeby recognizes that online ethnography is not distinct from the traditional one, as it functions under the same principles of data collection, participant-observation, interviews, and interpretative analysis. What changes in the online setting is that the research practices became mediated by the technologies that transport us to the internet – modems, routers, computers, smart-phones, applications, and so on.*

The proliferation of digital technologies generated what is today called the IT sector and created a new class of professionals that inhabit this field. Also, digital technologies created a plethora of actors whose practices would not exist without virtual worlds. Many researchers observed how

these actors build and navigate this continually expanding field. Anthropologist English-Lueck (2018) *researches the Silicon Valley and paints it as a complex field of* "diversity and discrimination, capitalist aims, and countercultural aspirations." Apart from people who create digital worlds, there are types of users whose practices would be unimaginable without it. Jenna Burrell (2012) researched on internet scammers in Ghana and showed how this practice that takes place online is tightly connected to religious organizations and the marginality of the West-African population. Also, an excellent example of a practice unimaginable without digital technology is hacking. Hackers in social sciences are approached from many angles, some that thematize them as crime committers (Steinmetz 2015) while others see them as a subculture (Coleman 2014). However, although the practices of these groups are concretely connected to digital technologies, that does not mean that they do not belong to a continuum of similar practices that only adopted to the contemporary context. That is why Miller (2018) argues that anthropology always approaches the digital in context, because without the context, any digital practice is only a capacity employable in multiple ways.

In thinking about the relationship between digital technologies and ethnographic method, what is of more significant interest for us is how technological development influenced classical ethnographic research. Ethnographic research, initially an anthropological method, became familiar to and widely used in all social sciences. The main characteristic of this method is the researcher's immersion with the community that she/he works with. As a result, the researcher should present an understanding of the community from an insider's perspective. The most common way of doing ethnography is participant-observation, followed by interviews and many other methods. This way, ethnographers rely on their personal experience with the community, conversations, and visual confirmation of the data they gather. What precedes ethnographic research is an introduction to the context through archival work and secondary sources. The most critical distinctive quality of ethnography is commonly called "being there," meaning that the researcher shares space and life with the community. With the technological revolution and advancement of communication technologies, one does not have to be there in order to participate and observe certain phenomena. The already mentioned research of the "Soulseek" users is an excellent example of the fieldwork that takes place in a space that is entirely mediated by digital technologies. For such research, the ethnographer has to be equipped entirely with hardware and software that supports this type of research. While this is an example of a wholly

digitalized inquiry, the majority of research today navigates between online and offline worlds. For example, media anthropologist Mona Abdel-Fadil (2013) shows how online websites can be successfully studied through a traditional in-person ethnographic account. In her research of religious websites Abdel-Fadil exposed what Krüger (2005) calls 'hidden knowledge', by showing what happens behind the screens. Drawing on the longitudinal in-person fieldwork in the Islam Online Offices in Cairo, Egypt, Abdel-Fafil analyzes rich data about Islam Online employees' work practices and meaning-making activities. Her research highlights new aspects of this influential Islamic website that would not be available if the website was to be studied through online – mediated - ethnography alone. Mediation in communication is one of the most significant changes introduced by digital technologies that ethnographers have to adapt to. Akemu and Abdelnour (2020) provide a good example of how the contemporary organizational ethnography is changed because much communication within organizations is mediated and decentered nowadays. A traditional meeting that an ethnographer would attend and observe in an organization that she/he researches is often switched for a chain of emails today. Ethnographers do not always have access to these emails, and this shift in communication represents one of the numerous examples of the troubles that ethnographers experience as a consequence of digital technologies.

Broader than the question of access is how mediated communication changed the very nature of ethnography and the idea of participation. Ethnographers refer to their research as fieldwork. In the traditional understanding, fieldwork represents a space/time continuum in which the ethnographer gathers data. With the mediation of communication, ethnographers are pushed to expand their fieldwork to virtual spaces. Many practices, from social movement activism to cooking and heritage preservation, utilize virtual worlds. Inquiry of these practices requires ethnographic methods to adapt to new ways of communication. Even if ethnographic research is conceptualized traditionally, researchers often do not have other options but to communicate with their informants through some of the digital software. Mediated communication often changes the nature of participant-observation. Traditional ethnographic tools hence adapt by prefixing themselves with "digital." Jordan Kraemer analyzes how classical ethnographic tool as fieldnotes have to adapt to the observation of digital space: "I found it difficult, for example, to report on the stream of posts and actions that constitutes the Facebook Newsfeed, until I discovered screenshots" (Kraemer 2016: 123).

Inquiry of the digital spaces and utilization of digital technologies for communication can be part of a broader ethnographic research, an addition to participant observation and the extension of the fieldwork. However, prefixing ethnography with "digital" brackets expresses the experiences of the researcher. While digital technologies enlarge and accelerate the space of communication, it, at the same time, narrows the ethnographer's experience and brings up additional ethical dilemmas, some of which we will be touched upon in the conclusion.

II. Before and After: Two research projects and their adaptations

a. Dragana Kovačević Bielicki's research project

The interdisciplinary project I proposed to conduct during Spring 2020 at iASK was submitted in Spring 2019, at the time when I personally could not have imagined the global circumstances and changes that were coming in Spring 2020. The main research interest was on organized far-right groups in three of the largest Western Balkans countries, namely Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The proposal was entitled "Connections between far-right extremism and religion in the Western Balkans". Western Balkans is a neologism introduced by the European Union to include former Yugoslav successor states with the exception of Slovenia and the addition of Albania. This geopolitical term was coined in the aftermath of the most recent violent conflicts in the Balkans, and in light of the EU accession efforts for the countries included in this definition. According to Christina Boswell (2000: 551), the early 1990s brought a certain kind of paradigm shift in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, most evident in the former communist countries. This was a shift from ideological to ethnic and nationalist groupings, and the resurgence of mobilization around nationalist or ethnic identities (ibid). Rarely anywhere else has this mobilization been as clear and as destructive as in former Yugoslavia. Here, ethno-nationalism has repeatedly shown both its appeal to the masses and its devastating destructive power, manifesting itself in its extreme forms.

The starting point of my research project was in this well-established fact that the Western Balkans has been one of the most unstable regions in Europe during its most recent history and that exclusionary ethno-nationalism remains a dominant group ideology with dangerous

potential for the future, its power not diminished but reaffirmed by recent locally and globally relevant phenomena that continue to affect the region. In addition, manifestations of ethno-nationalist ideologies in the three selected post-Yugoslav countries have for a long period been in close connection with manifestations of religious belonging to the three dominant organized religions in the three countries, namely Islam, Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity. Since ethicized politics has permanently reshaped the contours of legitimate political discourse (Ellinas 2010), tracing the extreme manifestation of nationalist, racist and other types of exclusionary behavior and discourses is of utmost importance precisely in this area, often labelled as a "hotbed" both in terms of extreme far-right and radical Islamist tendencies. The project´s main focus lied in the most extreme manifestations of ethno-nationalist ideologies in the area in the recent period, early 21st century up until the present and it was important to me for this focus to remain the same after I had to move the project fully online during Spring 2020.

In the original, pre-Covid-19 project design, there was already a significant online research component included, in terms of the extensive background research and a significant supplementary aspect of the original research that were planned to be conducted online, such as analysis of relevant websites, forums and social media groups. I have grown quite accustomed to conducting different types of both background and supplementary online research over the last fifteen years of doing independent social research. Ever since I started using this mixed approach, I have found that its benefits are often greater than the methodological and ethical challenges connected to it. I adopted the online research as unavoidable and useful for preparing and supplementing any type of in-person social research, yet never considered myself a strictly online researcher or even reflected in-depth on what that label meant prior to Spring 2020. At the time of designing the proposal, I certainly did not imagine that online research would be the only type of research possible for a long while. Many aspects of the projects had to be changed, adapted or cut during the ongoing worldwide crisis caused by Covid-19, as I detail here below, while the focus on extreme nationalism and nationalists in the selected region had to remain as the main, non-negotiable focus for a plethora of reasons, some of which were mentioned above.

The focus on far-right extremism was a renewal of my earlier research interest in the right-wing organizations and their members that was made marginal during the last decade of my professional focus on everyday nationalism among post-Yugoslav migrants and migration. This

focus on migration was adopted first for my PhD project at the University of Oslo (2012-2016) but also several different postdoctoral research projects that followed the completion of this degree. While some migrants can certainly personally subscribe to different extremists ideologies and discourses up to varying levels, I was not focusing on those extreme ideologies in particular, but on what Anderson (1992) called long-distance nationalism, in its arguably milder, everyday manifestations. I was interested in long-distance nationalism among predominantly non-radicalized people without any strong connections to any ideologically defined organization. The last project I conducted where far-right extremism and organizations were the main specific focus resulted in my master thesis, defended in 2008, and I was both very excited and fairly nervous to go back into this field of research during my iASK fellowship. It is a potentially highly prolific and undeniably interesting field for research, but it carries specific ethical and personal challenges for any researcher involved. Despite such challenges, I considered and still today maintain that in-person fieldwork and interviews were the best main way to obtain material for a research project designed in the above described way, for several reasons. One of these reasons had to do with access to the field and relationship and trust-building with the people I would research on, in addition to many ethical considerations. Out of these ethical considerations it seemed to me it is much more straight forward and genuine to disclose one´s position and interests, show up in person to interviews and events that include people who share the beliefs I label as far-right or extremist, very different to my own worldviews. In addition, the project's intended focus on religiosity envisioned religious belongingness as to a large extent private, internal matter for each individual, although not exclusively. The social component of this belonging and in particular participation in the rituals of the organized religion mattered for the project, but I considered that the basis has to be going to individuals and speaking about their personal religious beliefs and commitments, rather than observing these beliefs and commitments externally. For this type of focus, I needed to talk to people in person, approach the interlocutors directly and ask them for interview where we would discuss, among other relevant topics, their religious affiliations, habits and feelings.

One of the first things I had to do due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic was to make the focus on religion for the time being no longer central for this particular research period. This was a direct consequence of my much-considered decision not to interview people remotely. Interviewing people via Skype or other online applications would certainly have been an option

in different circumstances, had I already managed to establish my access to the field and build trust at the time when it became clear that fieldwork in the Western Balkans would not be possible in March 2019. My project was unfortunately at the very beginning at that stage and direct interviews of any type had to be left out of my near-future plans. Many other aspects of the proposed project besides interviewing were not as easily maintained without the possibility for physical fieldwork and in-person interviews in the three countries. I had to remain in Hungary for the duration of the scholarship period and did not have the possibility to attend or participate in relevant events in the three countries, again due to the pandemic. Moreover, suddenly there were no relevant events and gathering to attend as the three countries went through their own lockdowns and changes due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

While it was clear to me from the beginning that online participant observation and conversations at forums and in social media groups could not replicate or imitate participant observation and informal conversations, I also realized they do bring about access to a different kind of discourse and participation that would not be accessible in person and vice versa. This is part of the reason for arguing that while online and offline research is certainly not the same, it often overlaps and boundaries between the two are not set in stone. One of the other important things I needed to reconsider is feasibility of the scope I have chosen in the given time frame, in particular keeping in mind the delay caused by the need to read up on a whole new, unplanned body of literature before re-designing the project, focusing on online social research and online ethnography. The ideologies and groups in focus of the proposed project were to be both those denoted as Christian far right, and those who are described as radical Islamist extremists. The project intended to address these ideologies´ and groups´ close connection to certain religious organizations, actors, groups and teachings, both in terms of the ideological connections and in terms of the direct and concrete connections between the religious groups and organizations and the extremist circles. Aside from the task of first mapping extremist groups and ideologies in the three countries, which I managed to conduct during the Spring of 2020, for gathering concrete empirical material and online discourse I needed to choose only one of the proposed countries, in this case Serbia, due to the time constrictions. Originally looking into connections between extremism and religion, this project´s other specific contribution would have been in the fact that it looks at far right ideologies and radical Islamism in the region side-by-side and explores their commonalities. These commonalities are often less researched than their apparent differences.

The two ideological strands are assumed, for good reason, as directly opposed ideologies and "enemies"; however, their other, common "enemies" and the very similar tendencies and beliefs they hold in some aspects of their worldviews are an under-communicated, yet important aspect to be taken into consideration. Without the main focus on religious belonging and, for the time being the inability to gather relevant empirical material also in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this aspect of the research was blocked off as well. Reducing the number of relevant case studies and focusing only on those groups of nationalists framed as Orthodox Christian was partially related to this practical reasoning.

Yet, the reduction in the number of case studies for my project also had largely to do with changed private circumstances that were directly caused by the pandemic as well. With childcare completely closed and my toddler constantly at home due to Covid-19, for two months I was only able to work 50% of the time, sharing childcare responsibility evenly with my husband, also a researcher at IASK at the time. Many other researchers could not work even as much as I could, for similar or different practical reasons. Many researchers did not have the same luxury that their projects and salaries remained financed during the worst of the outbreak, with jobs and incomes lost or paused, not to mention the mental toll the pandemic and lockdowns put on people, paralyzing both their free movement and their minds and abilities to plan. From talking to my peers online or seeing their social media posts I realize that many, like myself, felt the pressure to still be highly productive while the world as they knew it was seemingly falling apart. Coping to make that pressure manageable and keeping the expectations of oneself realistic seemed to be a better path than risking a full burnout. During the pandemic, several researchers publicly commented on the reported increased submission rates (20-30%) to academic journals as highly gendered, with editors widely reporting disproportionate submissions by male authors relative to female authors, even relative to baseline differentials. Suspecting that women in general not only take the disproportionate share of labor in families and partnerships, not only in terms of child care, but also in terms of cognitive and emotional labor such as organizing the family's activities and checking in with extended family, authors such as Minelli (2020) pointed how care work is, in fact, often unbalanced – even among highly educated couples. In addition, families with children seem to be under an additional pressure as schools and kindergartens were fully closed. As Minelli also points out: "This pandemic can teach some of us an important lesson:

mothers and fathers together are facing a short-term reorganization of care and work time. In the long run, these changes in productivity will affect careers" (Minelli 2020).

Keeping all of the previously mentioned parameters and influences in mind, my first concrete research step remained the same as originally planned: to map out the relevant organizations and actors in all three originally included countries, as a basis for future research on the original research question. In addition, I came up with a new, temporary research question related specifically to far-right websites, organizations and individuals in Serbia, that will in future be explored in the two other countries that interest me in this case: what and whom do these sources reject and blame for different problems and crises in the society, in particular in view of the pandemic, and what arguments are used to justify and support scapegoating and blaming. This new research question was designed in order to later connect the three case studies together, keeping in mind my main hypothesis from the original proposal, i.e., that the discourses related to the cultures of othering and discursive enemy-construction are similar for very differently defined and ideologically opposed extremists groups. What unites these groups across national borders, across ethnic and religious divisions, is that they are traditionalist groups that are typically anti-LGBTQ+ oriented; they express the rejection of changing gender relations and feminism, the European Union, etc. They often share beliefs in and the use of conspiracy thinking, antisemitism and anti-migrant nativism, skepticism toward science, and many other ideologically framed themes, affects, and practices of othering.

The proliferation and spread of conspiracy theories during the pandemic especially caught my attention, in particular how social media was used to make these more mainstream and common than ever before. I could observe that the themes and individuals figuring as main protagonists of these conspiracy theories are quite universal, common not only for the Balkans' far-right but much wider, far-right elsewhere as well as strikingly influential among people who do not in any way see themselves as right-wing or extreme. For the future development of the project, I am very interested in ultimately looking into how acceptable and normalized this type of othering, originating often in far-right circles, becomes for the so-called ordinary people, which is not something I originally envisioned on exploring. By ordinary people I here refer to precisely those people who do not belong to any extremist circles or organizations and would often reject being connected in any way to such ideologies. Still, I found during the course of my online conducted

research that surprisingly many of them nevertheless reproduce the typical far-right, extremist discourses, and in particular contribute to the proliferation of conspiracy theories whether conscious of it or not. The ideas we once might have considered as extremist, reserved for marginal, typically far-right extremist groups, are today undoubtably increasingly spilling into mainstream discourses and everyday lives, and this worrying trend seems, for now, unstoppable.

b. Astrea Pejović's research project

The research project I proposed to iASK dealt with the discursive treatment of depleted uranium in Serbia. During the 1999 bombing of the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, NATO employed special bullets that were designed to pierce the thick steel of armored vehicles. The bullets in question are 30 mm PGU-14/B API bullets shot from the AN/GAU-8 30mm Avenger gun that were carried by the A-10/A Thunderbolt II airplane (Pavlović et al. 2001: 311). According to the United Nations' press release from 22 March 2000, NATO reported the use of 31,000 rounds of the depleted uranium bullets (United Nations 2000) at specific locations in the regions of the Peć-Đakovica-Prizren Highway, on the eastern border between Serbia and Kosovo in the Preševo valley and in the one location in Montenegro[1]. These bullets became highly controversial as their penetrator is layered with depleted uranium, a heavy metal that enhances the penetrative power of the weapon. Depleted uranium is the byproduct of the enrichment of uranium process in the nuclear powerplant. The American military industry started experimenting with it since the 1970s, as it is highly available, cheap and efficient[2]. Depleted uranium is a heavy metal with low radioactivity and as such can represent a threat to health and the ecosystem if the area where it was dispersed does not undergo the process of decontamination. While NATO claims that depleted uranium is not harmful to the environment, various individual and interest groups criticize its use in the NATO's arsenal.

After the 1999 bombing, the challenges to the use of depleted uranium during the bombing have not been constant. In the first years, an expert body was established, and a decontamination project took place between 2001 and 2007. The public discourse about the possible health and

[1] The official map of the targeted locations where PGU-14/B API bullets were used (without Luštica peninsula in Montenegro) available at https://www.nato.int/du/graphics/b010124k.jpg. For the location in Montenegro, visit http://eng.ceti.me/?portfolio=dekontaminacija-rta-arza-od-osiromasenog-urana-du.

[2] For more details about Uranium and the process of depletion available at International Atomic Energy Agency: https://www.iaea.org/topics/spent-fuel-management/depleted-uranium).

environmental damages were not loud. The World Health Organization's report from January 2001 suggested that the radiological toxicity of depleted uranium could cause a change in the biology of the body cells that are prone to the influence of the emission (soft tissues like lungs) and that the situation in Serbia and Kosovo must be further monitored (World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe 2001). The *New York Times* reported the concerns by the head of the United Nations task force in Kosovo, who claimed that NATO did not inform the UN about the usage of the radioactive ammunition (Simons 2001a, 2001b). The loudest actors in criticizing the use of depleted uranium in military weapons were, however, Italian soldier that served in NATO during 1999 and gathered in the association "Osservatorio Militare" [Military Observatory]. This group claimed that they got cancer due to exposure to depleted uranium in Kosovo (Toè 2016).

The connection between cancer and depleted uranium in Serbia became the main news only in 2018. Before that, its only advocates were Serbian right-wing anti-NATO actors and some minor political parties. In May 2018, however, the Serbian state overtook the narrative of causality between depleted uranium and the "cancer epidemic" by setting up the Committee for Research of the Consequences of NATO Bombing. Whether a "cancer epidemic" exists in Serbia is highly arguable and it depends on the methodology of reading the statistics. While Serbia has a rather average number of new cancer patients per year, it is the fourth state in the world ranked to overall cancer related mortality (Ilić and Ilić 2018). The experts consider that this devastating fact is not an epidemic, but the consequence of the late diagnostics and the overall poor conditions of the state-run healthcare system[3]. The Serbian healthcare system suffered immensely from the war, hyperinflation and the overall pauperization of the society, hence radiology equipment is deficient, and waitlists stretch from 3-6 months. It is against these background structural conditions that the state overtakes narratives that connect the "cancer epidemic" to depleted uranium.

The project "Social Life of Depleted Uranium: Citizenship and Memory Politics Twenty Years after the 1999 NATO Intervention in Serbia" commences from the critical moment in May 2018 when the Serbian state took over the narrative of causality between depleted uranium and the "cancer epidemic" in Serbia. The main argument from which the project departs is that the state

[3] Interview with Professor Zoran Radovanović, leading Serbian epidemiologist (5 February 2020).

constructs the “cancer epidemic” by identifying depleted uranium as the cause, while covering up the deterioration of the healthcare system during transition. Building on this argument, the project aims to show the power that depleted uranium attains in the hands of the state. As a nuclear weapon, depleted uranium is used to enhance explosion; as a discursive one, I argue in this project, it is a strong and efficiently powerful tool in accomplishing a wide range of political goals.

The project observes how depleted uranium contributes to the construction of Serbian identity after the 1990s wars, exploring how health can be central to that construction. With the narratives about the “cancer epidemic” and depleted uranium as its cause, the general health of the Serbian population is framed as destroyed by the NATO’s radio-active weaponry. In that sense, all Serbian citizens are represented as potential victims of the NATO intervention. Keeping in mind that the depleted uranium continues to exist after the intervention was over, this victimization continues even without NATO’s presence. Furthermore, the aim of the project is to understand how narratives about cancer and depleted uranium contribute to memorialization of the NATO bombing of Serbia. It aims to expose health and body politics as an alternative space for production of history and memory. The aims of the research are to understand what sick bodies can tell about war and power relationships after conflicts end.

The proposed project had for its main aims to do a sociological analysis of the power of depleted uranium to construct citizenship, to politicize state-citizens relations, and to frame memory politics. The project was designed to analyze how the connection between depleted uranium and the supposed dramatic rise of the mortality caused by cancer in Serbia is constructed and how it becomes part of politics and everyday life in Serbia.

The project departed from desktop research as it was planned. The first step was an extensive literature review for the theoretical framework. I framed the project within the paradigm that challenges the framing of Serbia as a post-conflict society. After the1990s wars ended, the international community rushed to label the former Yugoslav region as “post conflict,” aiming to employ the interventionist strategies to repair damaged societies (Hughes and Pupavac, 2005). Academic discourse also embraced the “post-conflict” category without much problematization of the concept. While post-colonial theory received abundant critique on the teleological implications of the *post* prefix, the “post-conflict” conceptualization, however, still seems to be

taken for granted. In a recent debate, a group of anthropologists working in South-Asian societies aimed to problematize *post* in "post-conflict" based on their ethnographic work. The debate intended to "go beyond evaluative assessments of peace-building and human-rights reports to reveal the complexities of life and politics in the gray areas between war and peace" (Shneiderman and Snellinger 2014). As Shneiderman and Snellinger (2014) emphasize, the international community and its normative peace-building strivings "ultimately envisions that the transition to peace is always effected irreversibly through the establishment of liberal democratic state institutions that protect the rights of individuals and minorities, and promote rule of law and free and fair elections". The main critique addresses the fact that such an approach "frames political history as episodic, rather than as a stream of events that flow into one another in a multidirectional manner," and that it "hardly captures the complex temporalities and experiential layers of conflict for those who've lived through conflict" (Shneiderman and Snellinger 2014). Their findings, however, show how interventionist politics produce unexpected results, and often keep the status quo or induce new conflicts. This research engages in these debates to draw attention to the problematic assignment of the "post-conflict" category to the region of former Yugoslavia. Therefore, the broader aim of the research is to question "post-conflict" as a universal category and its teleological implications.

Furthermore, after the desktop research, one of the aims became to engage with the theocratization of the social production of fear and its political exploitation. In the research of the narratives about the nuclear bomb during the Cold War in the United States, anthropologist Joseph Masco (2012: 225) argues that the bomb served "as a mechanism for accessing and controlling the emotions of citizens." I decided to follow Masco's framing of fear through emotions keeping in mind that my research also observes the relationship between the state and the citizens produced through the DU as highly affective. I argue that this affect produces fear among Serbian citizens. I borrow the definition of fear to understand the state-citizenship relationship from Sara Ahmed (2014: 64) who defines it "as an 'affective politics,' which 'preserves' only through announcing a threat to life itself." In the analysis of processes of securitization, Goldstein (2010: 487) shows that fear "functions as a principal tool of state formation and governmentality in the world today." Fear as a politically constructed emotion, in exchange, surrenders the political voice of the victims to the state (Edkins 2003: 9) who imposes

itself as the protector. The research aims to show that global warfare and its local outcomes create a suitable context for the production of the cultures of fear (Linke and Smith 2009).

Finally, after the desktop research, I decided to position myself within the emerging field of "military waste as cultural and area studies" (Zani 2019: 8). This emerging field observes former battlegrounds comparatively, claiming that contemporary wars are a global phenomena that create spaces that even though geographically and socio-historically divided, share experiences in the aftermath of war. In that sense, the issues of depleted uranium in Serbia can be compared with the landscapes of unexploded bombs in Laos, while at the same time engaging in the problematization of the paradigm of post-conflict.

The second planned step was ethnographic research in Serbia. Through participant observation and interviews, the research aimed to grasp the relations between the socio-political background twenty years after the bombing and the potential threat of depleted uranium. Through the ethnographic research I aimed at understanding the impact that depleted uranium had on both politics and everyday life in Serbia. While it is a real-existing physical particle, the medical research has yet to confirm a direct link between depleted uranium and the cancer rate in Serbia. Therefore, the existence of depleted uranium as a threat is mainly discursive. Through the ethnographic research, these narratives were supposed to help reveal how depleted uranium enters into the everyday life of Serbian citizens.

The ethnography was to be done in two stages. The first visit to the field took place in January 2020. In this period, I conducted interviews with the relevant actors who contribute to the discursive construction of depleted uranium. These interviews provided me with the background about the decontamination of the terrain after NATO bombing and about different takes on statistics that frame Serbia's cancer rate as an epidemic. The main part of the fieldwork was supposed to take place in late March 2020. In this period, I aimed to visit commemorations of the NATO bombing in Serbia and follow media reporting about depleted uranium. This part of the research was supposed to be conducted as participant observation. Employing this method, I aimed to understand how depleted uranium contributes to remembering the NATO intervention in Serbia.

The same as for Dragana, the outbreak of Covid19 kept me in Kőszeg. However, my inability to travel was not the only obstacle to the research. Due to the virus, lagre commemorations of the NATO bombing in Serbia were canceled. As I was hundreds of kilometers away from Serbia, my attention switched to the internet where I expected to find alternative commemorations. I turned to personal pages on social networks of the actors that I singled out as memory entrepreneurs expecting them to lead me to some sort of official commemoration. I wondered how Covid-19 would re-shape the memory of the NATO bombing, but at the same time how a new and quite real epidemic would influence narratives about depleted uranium and the supposed cancer epidemic. I spent a lot of time wandering around the world wide web, but it seemed to me that depleted uranium and the fear of cancer lost the battle to the real threat that was spreading around the world, at least for the time being. The conspiracy theories that surround Covid-19 epidemic like 5G technologies, Bill Gates and similar, started to spread incredibly fast and overtook the space that depleted uranium held. The fear for health that was once produced by depleted uranium was momentarily exchanged for Covid-19 and conspiracy theories.

Even though I spent all of my time online in forums, social networks, YouTube and portals looking for cues of depleted uranium I was unable to find almost any. Those that prevailed were just a mere reproduction of the discourses that existed prior to the Covid-19 epidemic. The only conclusion I could have made was that depleted uranium is after all not that powerful and that it was temporarily erased by the actual epidemic. By realizing that Covid-19 influenced memory politics in Serbia so strongly, I couldn't help but wonder, did the digital push turn me into an ethnographer of Covid-19 instead?

III. Conclusions and Recommendations: Thinking the digital in the age of Covid 19

It is very hard to think about the world at the present moment without thinking how the novel Coronavirus influenced it. The changed situation caused by the spread of this virus has (temporarily) pushed to the extreme the need for switching to online-based research methods in all fields of human intellectual production and the consumption of that production. The same extreme digital push we identified in social research also forced the archives, journals, museums

and libraries to make more material than ever available online. Universities and institutes had to adapt rapidly and organize teaching and discussion online.

Similar to the fact that our research methodologies could not be separated from our digital presence, as we argue repeatedly, social research is in many ways currently revolving around the changes brought about by the global pandemic. This is why we consider that social researchers were among the ones who were the most expected and forced to move their focus online, following society in general. Our "laboratories" were not closed and inaccessible during the pandemic-related lockdowns as we research on people and society. Many of us had to keep researching, but the access to research fields and opportunities for employing different methods changed significantly. These adaptations for many fields and institutions will not only be remembered as an episode in Spring/Summer 2020 but will continue also into Fall/Winter 2020 and beyond.

As this paper shows, both of us, as well as countless others had to pause and re-think our project plans due to Covid-19. We had to not only use the time to increase our own digital literacy and literacy in the field of digital methods, but to re-envision and adapt our concrete research projects and plans. In that process we also needed to radically rethink the way we see ourselves as researchers, as well as the way we conceptualize the field(s) of our research. Even if it was possible to directly translate our research from the so-called offline to online world and stick to the original ideas and methods more or less literally, it did not seem right to do so, keeping in mind the specific topics we were focusing on. The world has changed so much, so suddenly. All human societies and all actors in them have been affected, and we could not ignore that fact and not take the new reality of the pandemic into account. It seemed to us that not only our own projects, but virtually any social research project designed in the pre-Covid-19 world did not make sense if it were to be left as it was before, ignoring the new reality.

Based on our experiences and reflections, it remains for us here to identify and reflect on some of the advantages and challenges of the continuous turn of social research into a significantly online-based practice that no doubt awaits us in future. We agree with Miller's (2018) criticism of moralistic discourses that often surround digital technologies while simplifying and romancing the pre-digital eras. We believe that digital, mediated practices are here to stay and to be wisely used, but ideally not without constant, critical in-depth reflections about what they are and are

not good for. This is why our reflections also contain recommendations, or rather our ideas on how specific challenges could be met and the advantages used to a common benefit, while we continue navigating the blurry lines between online and offline research, and between online and offline world(s) in general.

To start off with the positive, what we see as direct advantages of conducting one's research mainly online are numerous and we cover only some of them that are currently obvious to us, with a list more than open to being expanded in future both by us and others. As will be shown, however, advantages and disadvantages are often entangled, intertwined and ambiguous, same as the constructed online/offline difference and many others. As a clear example of an advantage, research online is typically very accessible and often timesaving as it enables one to instantly communicate and get quick feedback from research participants and subjects. The virtual online space is vast, offering many possibilities to research and examination of what is of interest to us, across very different platforms– for example websites, forums, social networks, blogs, videos and numerous other sources. In addition, the direct availability of vast amounts of non-elicited discourse on almost any topic imaginable can in some cases reduce the ethical challenges brought about by the fact that much of traditional social research revolves around researchers eliciting the narratives that they consequently analyze, thus opening room for influencing and potentially even manipulating the research results.

Online research can be time- and resource-saving in many other ways than the ones already mentioned. Convenient search methods and engines are readily available from the comfort of one's own home or office. Unlike the spoken word in physical settings and events, some of the discourse we analyze tends to be more readily available for analysis, as it is either already in text form, or it is easier to record and save. This makes time-consuming transcriptions less needed. In the case of participatory online ethnography, reflective fieldwork notes are still needed, but arguably less demanding, since a lot of communication and participation happens in a written form already. Nevertheless, the possible disadvantage, or rather a common trap is that online researchers can easily become too comfortable with the accessibility of certain content and fail to regularly save and record it, thinking it will still be there tomorrow if needed. One needs to constantly keep in mind that any content available online can disappear and thus maintaining a

strong incentive to keep recording, screenshooting, saving what one needs without a delay is essential.

In some cases, doing research online and not in person is convenient also in terms of safety concerns for both individual researchers and participants. For example, the safety of a researcher is an important concern, especially if the research includes focus on dangerous and aggressive ideologies, groups and people. Here, the possibility for the researcher not to be directly visible and physically present can be an advantage and a relief. Safety and anonymity of the research participants is, on the other hand, of particular concern when research focuses on vulnerable and marginalized groups of people. While the anonymity of participants is always an important recommendation and concern, the situation is a bit more complicated with the debate on self-disclosure of researchers and their research aims. Not fully disclosing oneself as a researcher thus easily switches from being framed as an advantage to, at the same time, being an ethical challenge and concern. On the other hand, for loaded research topics such as research on extremist groups of the type that was exemplified in our paper, full disclosure can negatively impact not only access to the field but also the research results, and the dilemma is brought back to its beginning with no resolution. To illustrate this issue, when Dragana did her earlier mentioned research on antisemitism among far-right groups in 2007/2008, antisemitism as such was, after a careful consideration and consultations with her advisors, not directly and openly mentioned to the interlocutors when presenting her research topic. The reasoning was that the mention of such an inflammatory notion might skew the research results and put interlocutors in a defensive mode where they would frame their views and beliefs differently than they would if such a label was not evoked and flagged. This, similar to racism, is a label that rarely anyone wants to accept as describing their views, even among the members of the far- and alt-right groups. In consequence, to be fair and ethical to our interlocutors no matter who they are, while some aspects of their discourse can very well be interpreted as anti-Semitic, xenophobic, racist et cetera, we argue that interlocutors should not ever themselves be labelled by researchers as anti-Semites, xenophobes and racists, unless this labeling is their own and directly cited.

Similar ambiguities and dilemmas are in play if we focus on the traditional anthropological conundrum of when and how much any researcher is an insider or outsider to his/her field of research, and now applied specifically to online spaces. We mentioned in the literature review

that in typical anthropological research, a researcher is expected to immerse in the field and present an understanding of the community from an insider's perspective. The insider-outsider dilemma remains relevant for any social research, but solely as an inspiration for constant critical reflection and self-examination – without denying the fact that, as Bakalaki (1997) puts it "the "insider"-"native" versus "outsider"-"foreigner" dichotomy has been relativized and deconstructed, as have many other categories (e.g. periphery versus center, private versus public) that used to be central to anthropological theorizing".

As with the previously problematized dichotomy between online and offline spaces, this division is also useful as a guiding principle that helps us question ourselves and our methods, but not if taken as a real, sharp dichotomy. In migration studies, for example "Integration is always thought of as being established, less problematic, less fragile among those belonging to the national people" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 310), and we would add that the same goes for insiderhood/outsiderhood in relation to the other constructed groups than the national and ethnic ones, including the ones constructed in online spaces. Anthropologist Marianne Gullestad stated something similar in an interview with Lien and Melhuus (Lien and Melhuus 2011: 135): "I see the traditional division of anthropology and sociology, as well as the division between mainstream anthropology and anthropology 'at home', as an inheritance from the binary segregationalism of colonialism." Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002) further problematize and deconstruct these myths and divisions, widespread both in everyday discourse as in many research projects by pointing out to what they call the trap of methodological nationalism in research. Methodological groupism of any kind is a similar type of a trap, as pointed out by, for example, Bauböck and Faist (2010) and Kovačević Bielicki (2016). This trap of groupism particularly relates to a constructed insiderhood/outsiderhood of an online researcher in relation to their field. The question can be also be reversed: Who is ever a "true" insider, same as, who is ever "really" integrated in any society or a group?

The same type of criticism applies to sharply differentiating between immersion, in the sense of long-term settlement in the field, from occasional and usually short-term visits to the field, whether we are talking about online or offline fieldwork. As we already raised a concern that mediated communication often makes participant-observation less participatory, this is not an unimportant dilemma. However, maintaining this as another taken for granted, sharp division

does not make sense for any contemporary fieldwork, where it often becomes really unclear where our private lives end and the fieldwork starts, when we are online as private people and when as researchers. Kraemer (2016) notices that while fieldwork in classical terms is often a place dislocated from the researcher's experience, the move to social networks collapse the researcher's space with the one that she/he observes. To illustrate this with a concrete example, while Kraemer was observing the activities of her informants on Facebook, she was herself a Facebook user, so she had a dilemma whether to open a new account for the research and, in that way, try to keep her research separate from her private life. "I had to decide whether to create a new Facebook account for my research, which, with few contacts, might appear suspicious or artificial – outside the bounds of usual sociality." (Kraemer (2016: 124). Kraemer addressed these issues by creating instead a separate ''Group'' on Facebook for her interlocutors, which allowed her to browse status updates and activities in one place without making the group's boundaries visible to other users – or disconnecting from her existing network. Some types of creative solutions akin to this one are often available, but as they are always specific to a concrete case study and contexts, we believe that a general, one-size-fits-all prescription simply cannot be given.

If mediated interviews and participation are chosen to replace in-person interviews, additional challenges that can occur besides those we already wrote about in terms of challenging relationship- and trust-building if there is no possibility or promise of an in-person meeting. Deborah Lupton, a professor at the University of New South Wells, whose useful online webinar "Conducting qualitative fieldwork during Covid-19," publicly available on Youtube, mentions important challenges in on-line interviewing[4]: Participants might be more pressed regarding time, and might lack infrastructural resources for interviewing (e.g., equipment for video or audio interviews). The additional concern is that online interviewing puts a limit at which participants can be included. Besides infrastructural resources or access to internet, people who may lack basic digital skills and the ability to use the applications or tools needed to participate might end

[4] The webinar is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSU3N3EB1O8&feature=youtu.be. Lupton also initiated and edited a very useful crowdsourced google document on doing fieldwork in a pandemic: D. Lupton, ed. (2020) "Doing fieldwork in a pandemic". Ccrowd-sourced document. Available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1clGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B6P0NvMgVuiHZCl8/edit?ts=5e88ae0a#.

up being left out even if they are in the direct focus of the research. According to Lupton, analogue remote methods can be of help in such cases, for example sending survey questions or interview questions to people by post and asking for these to be returned the same way.

One of the greatest challenges of focusing solely on online content relates to the potential dis-embeddedness of the content in relation to its wider socio-spatial realities. Seminal and contemporary literature on online ethnographic research has largely abandoned splitting observations in digital environments from observations in socio-spatial environments, in favor of embedding one within the other (Hine 2015; Horst and Miller 2012; Madianou and Miller 2012). Ideally, social researchers engaging in online research would look for ways to link the interaction in online environments with those in socio-spatial environments and the lives of different research participants. Androutsopolous (2008) notes how data collection involving direct contact with internet users through means such as surveys, interviews, and participant observation has been often advocated and occasionally carried out in combination with log data as a way to meet these challenges.

Finally, as the digital spaces challenge our research methodologies, they also push and reframe the ethical norms of which social scientists need to be constantly aware. Currently, one of the main global issues that concern participation in cyberspace is privacy. The data protection of internet users is of great concern for regulatory bodies worldwide. Research done online also has to deal with the set of issues that otherwise would not be applied if the participant-observation or an interview were taking place in the offline setting. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2016) lists a basic number of questions that a researcher has to think about: “What ethical obligations do researchers have to protect the privacy of subjects engaging in activities in ‘public’ Internet spaces?” Among others, there are questions about how the public space is defined on the internet, what is the fine line between public and private? how is data stored? how is anonymity assured? how can a researcher prove if the subject is not a minor? etc..

Our particular interest concerns the often-porous border between public and private spaces. There are numerous reasons why conducting an interview from an apartment can influence both the researcher’s questions and the interlocutor’s answers. If the interview is taking place for example on Facebook messenger or skype, are those interfaces public or private? Also, if a researcher yields data from chat groups on communication applications such as Viber, WhatsApp

or Telegram what stays on record and what should be kept off record? Same platforms pose the question of accessibility. On the one hand, a researcher can have a hard time accessing these closed groups. On the other hand, the researchers themselves might be, for different reasons, prevented from participating in the groups, for example regarding a certain disability or technical demands. Finally, the nature of consent completely changes in the virtual spaces. A signed paper in the traditional research would represent evidence of an agreement, while different types of digital consent can prove to be an obstacle for the conducting research. These dilemmas seem to challenge every step the researcher makes in the cyber spaces; therefore, a constant reflexion has to be made in order for the research to be conducted within ethical norms.

To conclude, as repeatedly mentioned, we argue that in order to keep up with, and analyze the world and societies around us, all researchers must, up to a certain point, engage in online research methods and be able to navigate and switch between online and offline, thus making them united and inseparable, while being aware that they are not the same. The best we can recommend is that the continuous critical reflection on their use and boundaries is the key for navigating contemporary social research and making the best use out of these different, inseparable approaches. Both sides of a "contemporary-life coin", the digital and "the real", bring specific challenges and advantages. They are not to be equated one to the other, but they do need to be continuously combined and intertwined in social research. Permanently focusing solely on the online content, by using only online approaches, would risk research projects becoming at times too detached from the everyday physical reality of the producers and users of this content. Focusing solely on in-person research, on the other hand, seems out of touch with contemporary reality. Therefore, we firmly believe that contemporary social research ideally makes use of both approaches by combining and embedding the online content in the offline world. That is why Miller (2018) argues that anthropology always approaches the digital in context, because without the context, any digital practice is only a capacity employable in multiple ways. Another general guideline for doing online social research might seem vague, but it is one of the best possible recommendation available: we always need to adapt concrete research solutions to a specific context, to each individual case study, and most importantly, always critically reflecting on and finding good arguments for each choice and step we make.

As of now, we cannot even predict how many more waves of Covid-19 infections are still to hit our societies worldwide, therefore, re-thinking digital methodologies is more crucial than ever as it seems our lives will be further digitalized. While the technologies have to adapt to new lockdown-friendly functioning, the role of social research in the changed world is also to better understand the nature and possibilities of the digital worlds and help with the inevitable transition. This is why the social scientists need to increasingly cooperate with the IT sector, in order to better facilitate, no longer so much the adaptation of the internet to our everyday lives, but in making everyday life more transferable to, and available on the Internet in all of its important social aspects, ranging from education and work to entertainment, shopping, fitness, cooking, contact with family and friends, and numerous other spheres.

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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AS NEW NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY: ON THE RESOLUTION OF THE MACEDONIAN NAME RESOLUTION

Dimitar Nikolovski

Introduction

The SDSM (Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia) led government in the Republic of North Macedonia has been lauded by Western liberal forces as a bright example of progressive politics in the otherwise troublesome region of the Western Balkans. The government came to power in 2017 after an 11-year long reign of the conservative VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), which was characterized as 'state capture' by Western critics. SDSM, along with its junior partners from the ethnic Albanian camp, formed the government after a long period of civil and partisan oppositional activism in the country, culminating with the Colorful Revolution in the summer of 2016. Though, without a doubt, challenged by the evergreen problems of systemic corruption, what earned the praise of Euro-Atlantic elites was the readiness of the new government to close the "big national questions," all in the direction of integration into NATO and the EU. This strategy rests on three, very contentious, pillars:

1. Fixing relations between the majority ethnic Macedonians and the less numerous ethnic Albanian community, mainly through a new law on languages, through which more extended linguistic rights were given.
2. Improving relations with the neighbor to the East – Bulgaria – with the purpose of gaining bigger support in Euro-Atlantic integrations.
3. Solving the 27-year old 'name issue' with the southern neighbor Greece, which has definitely impeded said integration, mainly through NATO.

All three actions have produced some results. Following the signing of the Agreement with Greece, the country was invited to join NATO, and awaiting a start for EU membership negotiations. The new Law on Languages has entered into force with resistance from ethnic Macedonians. The Agreement for Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia was signed on 1 August, 2017,

between the prime ministers of the two countries, and both parliaments have since ratified it. It provided for the establishment of bilateral expert commissions to discuss burning historical issues, and produced much commotion, especially within the framework of European integration and Bulgaria's pressures to resolve the issue of naming the "Macedonian language."

All three pillars have been opposed by VMRO-DPMNE, including non-partisan civil activists, and a radical left party – Levica (the Left) - born out of the anti-VMRO-DPMNE protests.

This paper is dedicated to the most burning of the three issues – the resolution of the name disagreement with Greece, and the effects it is having on the definition of citizenship and cleavages within the country. In particular, for the purposes here, it discusses whether European integration might serve as a new national mythology for Macedonia.

A Multi-Ethnic Nation?

This paper is inspired by several statements of Prime Minister Zaev, in which he speaks of a multi-ethnic nation. I use George Schöpflin's chapter titled "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths" in the influential volume "Myths and Nationhood" (1997), and use the case study of the referendum on the name change in Macedonia to put the two into communication.

First, the controversial statements by Prime Minister Zaev. In 2019, Zaev received the Isa - beg Ishakovic International Award in Sarajevo, in recognition for his work as he "significantly improved relations in the Western Balkans region, and demonstrated strong political leadership in the context of a more decisive regional cooperation with the European Union and NATO."[5] During his acceptance speech, he stated: "I and my multi-ethnic people [*narod*] are truly lucky."[6] He continued along the same lines a few days later, in an address to Milo Djukanovic, his Montenegrin colleague from the sister party Democratic Party of Socialists where he passed on the "warm greetings from the multi-ethnic Macedonian people."[7] These statements, quite expectedly, were severely criticized within the country. When asked to make a statement during a press conference, which people [*narod*] he referred to, he elaborated:

[5]https://www.sarajevotimes.com/zoran-zaev-won-the-isa-beg-ishakovic-international-award/
[6] ibid.
[7]https://alfa.mk/zaev-vo-obid-da-izmisli-nov-multietnichki-makedonski-narod/

"The Macedonian people in the Republic of North Macedonia is the people of the Republic of North Macedonia. And it is multi-ethnic. It is composed of Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma, Bosniaks, Serbs and all the others who live in it. So the phrase the multi-ethnic people of Macedonia, or of the Republic of North Macedonia is the term we are now using. I use it on purpose because I believe that we are a multi-ethnic country with a multi-ethnic people, but we are still all the Macedonian people. Who belong to the Republic of North Macedonia."8

Returning to the issue of mythology, what I would like to explore is whether this multi-ethnic nation is truly being formed, with Euro-Atlantic integration as a central founding myth. To understand this more clearly, I use Schöpflin's understanding of myth, as it is "one of the ways in which collectivities – […] nations – establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own systems of morality and values" (Schöpflin 1997: 19), and would like to see whether for the Macedonian nation, the compromise with Greece, especially done under the auspices of European integration, establishes a new myth. Schöpflin continues with a statement that, in this day and age, might be too monolithic for establishing new mythologies; he says that "myth is a set of beliefs, usually put forth as a narrative, held by a community about itself" (ibid.). I doubt that the whole community will hold this myth to be true, even in the short term. However, what is important here is the tendency for the establishment of new mythologies. Like any mythologies, national myths need not be validated by historical truth, but rather perceptions are at the forefront. Schöpflin notes, however, that myths are not about falsehoods and perceptions, since communities might be aware it is not rooted within historical facts. Content, therefore, is of vital importance. To finalize this section with Schöpflin's words: "Myth is, then, a key element in the creation of closures and in the constitution of collectivities. At the heart of this argument is the proposition that myth is vital in the establishment of coherence, in the making of thought-worlds that appear clear and logical, in the maintenance of discourses and generally in making cosmos out of chaos" (Schöpflin 1997: 20).

European integration in the Western Balkans has taken on some of the qualities of myth, and the desirability of membership has not been disputed by the political mainstream throughout the

[8]https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/zaev-insists-that-the-macedonian-people-is-a-multi-ethnic-mix/

problematic transitions. As will be seen, the resolution of the naming dispute invariably influences the identity of the people inhabiting what is now called North Macedonia. However, this difficult pill to swallow has been justified exactly through the promise of a better life with membership in NATO, and, more specifically, the European Union. Thus the central question of this paper is: Is Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration a key element in a new national mythology? This question will be explored though the contention arising from the process of changing of the name, and the referendum in particular.

Context on the Agreement

The Prespa Agreement, signed on 12 June 2018, ended a 27-year old dispute between Greece and Macedonia. In short, after the declaration of independence from the Yugoslav Federation, the newly established Republic of Macedonia faced difficulties of recognition, primarily from its Southern neighbor Greece. The Greek administration at the time had purported that the very usage of the name "Macedonia" meant territorial pretentions, considering it coincided with the name of its northern region of the same name, despite the fact that the name of the country had been Federal or Socialist Republic as part of Yugoslavia since the end of World War II. Seeing no way out, the Macedonian side accepted being taken into the United Nations under the provisional name The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), provided that the two countries hold talks on a permanent solution to the naming dispute. This very issue has been a potent breeding ground for heightened nationalism on both sides of the border in the years since.

Despite the obvious problem, the two countries had cooperated, especially in the economic field, very successfully, while the UN, under the special negotiator Matthew Nimetz, sought to help the two countries overcome the differences on the name issue. Following a Greek-initiated veto on NATO membership for Macedonia in 2008, the VMRO-DPMNE government (2006-2017) used a well-known strategy for increasing popular support – by increasing nationalism. The core of the issue was that the usage of the word Macedonia in the Republic of Macedonia meant that the country and its people laid claim to the ancient Kingdom of Macedon, along with its most famous ruler Alexander the Great. Even though such a sentiment was present, practically the identity of Macedonians had always been connected to Slavic culture. However, the VMRO-DPMNE government engaged in a re-definition of national identity. From a predominantly Slavic identity,

it moved an ancient Macedonian identity to the forefront, primarily through architecture, i.e. the controversial Skopje 2014 project, when a giant statue of Alexander was built on the main square, along with the whole royal family, and buildings in a neoclassical/baroque style.

After the change of government, and with increased support and pressures from both the EU and US representatives, and considering the specificities of the Greek government at the time, the Agreement was reached. In short, the new name of the country would be the Republic of North Macedonia, both internationally and within the country. The language remains Macedonian, but with an emphasis that it belongs to the family of Slavic languages, while the citizenship is designated as Macedonian/of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Considering that there was already a national consensus reached by all mainstream parties that, once an agreement with Greece was reached, the solution would have to go to a referendum, this option was given in the Agreement itself. The date for the referendum was set for 30 September, 2018, setting the scenes for a tense summer on the political scene. The question for the referendum read: "Are you in favor of NATO and EU membership through accepting the Agreement with Greece?" Highly contested, this question was set in such a way in order to quell all illusions that the name change is for no other reason than to lift the blockades to international organizations by Greece, due to the existing problem.

The Existing Cleavages

In this paper I claim that what we are witnessing in Macedonia are two opposing mythologies, which are dividing society into two monolithic camps. Whereas the right-wing mythology of VMRO-DPMNE and affiliated organizations seek to represent the "people" in an ethno-nationalist sense, the left-wing populism of SDSM (oppositional, social-democratic party) and its affiliates claim to represent the "citizens" in a multi-ethnic state. Both camps claim to represent Macedonian citizens on a large scale. Both camps have supporting media that exacerbate this understanding of their constituencies, but act in similar ways with only minor differences in wording.

I claim that two parallel civil societies exists today – one, already established and modeled on the Western imaginations of civil societies in transition, and another, in its birth, as an antithesis to

the previous one (that could be labeled uncivil). In the attempt to establish a populist chain of equivalences, the two civil societies have a different definition of their constituencies. The left-wing civil society represents the 'citizens' – a multi-ethnic, vigilant, aware, and pro-Western citizenry, with an orientation towards the substantive understanding of democracy. On the other hand, the right-wing civil society represents the 'people' – largely ethnically Macedonian, proud, resistant to the "corrupt West", and with a clear preference to the procedural, majoritarian understanding of democracy. What was begun during the rule of VMRO-DPMNE in 2006-2017, the referendum on the name change has strengthened and clarified.

The European (North) Macedonians

The question itself implied the direction of the YES campaign. The main slogan used by this camp was "For a European Macedonia". At campaign rallies, internet campaigns and TV appearances, (headed by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev) YES campaigners primarily spoke of the benefits of membership.

NATO membership gained some attention, expectedly in the direction of better security, being a part of a larger family and being in a military alliance with neighbors Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania. Security is particularly important because of the memories of the 2001 conflict between state armed forces and ethnic Albanian insurgents. The ever potent perception of "threat" from Albanian nationalism and separatism was used both informally and formally, posing the imperative that these "appetites" would finally be settled once the country entered NATO.

The EU, on the other hand, dominated the campaign, as a powerful strategic goal of the country and its citizens. It was approached in both a civilizational and practical way. The civilizational aspect was that Macedonia has always been a part of Europe, both geographically and culturally, thus we need to remove any obstacles impeding us from it. This notion was always juxtaposed to the East, especially Russia. Thus, the dichotomy was put between Europe of democracy, human rights and high culture, and the East, like Russia and Turkey, i.e. autocracies and models of the past.

In practical issues, the story was told through both truthful and augmented representations of what the EU might mean for Macedonian citizens. Much like an electoral campaign, it was

presented that the YES vote would bring more employment, better paid jobs, opening of new markets, mobility for the youth, even free healthcare in Europe. Most importantly, European integration meant an end to the "voting by feet," i.e., to stop people from migrating out of the country for economic reasons. This aspect, however, was coupled with the identity question as well.

For ethnic Macedonians, the primary and easiest exit ticket from the country was getting a Bulgarian passport, due to the fact that Bulgaria is an EU member state. The question of Bulgaria is the other contentious issue for Macedonian identity, after the Greek one. Besides Greece and the naming issue, Macedonia has a conflicting national mythology with Bulgaria in its core. Bulgarian historiography states that the Macedonian nation, language, culture, identity, do not exist, but are rather essentially Bulgarian. Thus, for a Macedonian national to receive Bulgarian citizenship, one should sign a notarized statement that they are Bulgarian, along with all their ancestors. Thus, when a YES campaigner would say that EU membership would stop people from wanting to move out, it also meant stopping Macedonians from becoming Bulgarian, maintaining their Macedonian identity. The name change should be an easy pill to swallow then.

The composition of the YES campaign was the following:

- SDSM supporters, since it was signed by this party in power. Overall, these voters tend to be less nationalistic, more multi-ethnic and more enthusiastically pro-European
- Supporters of ethnic Albanian parties, since all of them (both opposition and incumbent) publicly supported the Agreement. Ethnic Albanians are less emotionally invested in the name issue, and have continuously claimed that NATO and the EU are the most important strategic goals for them, even at the expense of conflict, especially after Albania had entered NATO
- Less numerous ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Roma, Aromanians etc.), for similar reasons as Albanians
- Significant parts of the Colorful Revolution participants, since their definition of citizenship coincided with the EU idea.

Macedonians of "Boycott"

Practically, an "Against" campaign did not materialize. Rather, from the onset, BOYCOTT was seen as the only option for the opponents of the Agreement. The explanation why BOYCOTT was the preferred option contqains several layers:

- By law, a referendum is only successful if a 50% quorum is reached. Keeping in mind the enormous success of SDSM at the local elections of the previous year, coupled with the support of Albanians and other ethnic communities, opponents were not certain that there would be more votes Against than For. Electoral math supported this claim. Roughly 1.8 million voters are on the voting list, according to the State Electoral Commission. The list has been contested for years but has not been cleaned up yet. It also does not help that the country has not held a population census since 2002, either. Usually, there are no more than 1.2 million voters at elections, due to migration and political disinterest. Thus, putting the apathetic and those unable to vote (being abroad etc.) with those opposing the Agreement would prove successful in creating the picture that more people opposed the Agreement.
- The second reason why BOYCOTT was simply rhetoric – they do not want to decide. In the words of one of my informants: "Our ancestors fought and died and voted for this country in the present form. This name is given to us as a legacy. I do not have the right to vote in any way on this. This question cannot be." For boycotters, the solution was bad and should not be legitimized.
- The third reason was simply institutional distrust. Accordingly, if you vote, you have no guarantees that it will not simply be counted as a YES. If you boycott, it is more difficult for them to fake it!
- Finally, the fourth reason was the name itself. For boycotters, the name was manipulative, and contained a whole matrix of possible answers, so it should not be answered.

The symbolic production of the BOYCOTT camp indicates the birth of Macedonian Alt Right: Nationalism coupled with institutional distrust and anti-establishment politics. In fact, the BOYCOTT campaign never said it would stop there, but rather would continue to fight against the current government and take back the country. In addition, Steve Bannon and Pepe the Frog

were used as symbols. Thus, the move to change the name was presented as a part of a globalist conspiracy headed by the deep state, epitomized through George Soros and his puppets in the EU. Hashtags such as #deepstate, #bannon, #Qanon, were used to give it international context, and to show the Macedonian struggle as one worthy of solidarity with other peoples fighting globalist powers. The moral argument went that the name change is a genocide against Macedonians. Considering the EU supported it, it fit within the story of also building refugee camps in the country. At the final rally, protesters wore David's stars on their sleeves, to show the parallel between the Macedonian name genocide and the Holocaust.

Most interestingly, the BOYCOTT campaign employed populist tactics more successfully than the YES camp. BOYCOTT emerged as the empty signifier arising from an equivalential chain of a plethora of entrenched and current grievances. According to its participants, BOYCOTT was the culmination of national deficiencies, such as the criminal transition, and the hurt national "being" with relations to Greece, Bulgaria, and the Albanians. BOYCOTT is the resistance against a global conspiracy, so Macedonia fought for conserving Christian Europe from the globalists and Muslim migrants. In addition, if you BOYCOTTed, it meant that you also reacted against current scandals, such as the dubious distribution of innovation grants to companies close to government officials, or the fact that the daughter of the Foreign Affairs Minister won a governmental scholarship to study in the Netherlands. Finally, it also meant that you were angry with the mayor of Skopje for not having fought against the scourge of mosquitoes during the summer well enough.

The composition of BOYCOTT was primarily ethnic Macedonian, the majority belonging to various right-wing organizations:

- The most vocal was a coalition of smaller, newly formed political parties and formal and informal civil society groups, the most notable being the United Macedonia, a direct copy of Putin's United Russia, not hiding pro-Russian sentiments. They were joined by the World Macedonian Congress, an umbrella organization of Diaspora groups. Furthermore, they were supported by newer right-wing groups such as the Hardcores [*Tvrdokorni*] and the Christian Brotherhood.
- The main opposition party, VMRO-DPMNE, played a tricky role. Being vocally against, they never called for a boycott, but rather that everyone should act "in

accordance with their conscience." In the field, however, it was obvious that an unofficial direction to members was to boycott.

- The most significant "transfer" from the Colorful Revolution to BOYCOTT was Levica – the Left- a radical left-wing party, born out of anti-VMRO DPMNE protests. According to them, the Agreement endangered the fight to self-determination, was imperialistic, and in any case, the country should not join NATO. This coalition produced some unexpected results, such as Hardcores, a proto-fascist organization, supporting and promoting events in a leftist social center with anarchist bands, just because they were anti-NATO.

The Referendum Outcome

On 30 September 2018, only 36.9% of voters participated in the referendum, 91.4% of whom were in favor of the Agreement. This meant that, out of 1.8 million official voters, only about 600,000 supported the name change.[9] Both sides declared victory. The YES camp, i.e. the government, would proclaim, since it was merely a consultative referendum, and since the voter list was not valid, the numbers showed a clear indication of the general will. Thus, they would go ahead with constitutional changes.

BOYCOTT, on the other hand, also celebrated. Considering only 37% voted, they believed that 1.2 million people opposed the Agreement, thus the government had lost its mandate to continue pursuing its goal. After the Law on Languages, and the Agreement with Bulgaria, this was the first time one could see the Macedonian right-wing celebrate on the streets. They pledged to prevent further enactment of the Agreement, and are pushed for the resignation and trial of the government for high treason. The BOYCOTT turned into RESIGN and ARREST.

As previously mentioned, this referendum solidified cleavages in the Macedonian political spectrum, with one significant change, that of the Left. It also gives the rise to the Macedonian Alt Right, as a prominent part of the wider right-wing movements.

The New Mythology Discussed: A Conclusion

[9] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45699749

When discussing the functions of myths, Schöpflin (1997) sees it as an instrument of self-definition, membership and rules, world-view, and boundaries of the community. According to this understanding, the new mythology in North Macedonia would be that of a multi-ethnic European nation, one that would espouse in its citizens the values of the progressive politics of the EU, and with membership would distinguish it from other, non-European Union nations. In this sense, it is a visionary mythology which expects an "easing" of nationalist narratives at the expense of European ones, even amongst its neighbors. In opposition to this, protesters against the new name chose to keep the boundaries as they are, with a clearly defined Macedonian nation within the state.

Myth can be an instrument of identity transfer (Schöpflin 1997), as a new identity can be superimposed on an older one. Following this, it can be suitable for ethnically different groups to be brought closer or even assimilate together. In the case of North Macedonia, the new mythology would build an identity beyond the ethnic and religious diversity that exists at the moment. This would be a European identity, holding the mythology of the process of European integration by accepting the name change, as well as the new Law on Languages. This would, consequently, alleviate the inter-ethnic tensions threatening to destabilize the country. This European identity is exactly what the other side is fearful of: the loss of any domination for ethnic Macedonians and the superimposed increase of domination by other communities, particularly Muslim Albanians, under the guise of European, multi-ethnic nationhood.

Another, very interesting observation that Schöpflin (1997: 2) makes about mythologies is that "of offering explanations for the fate of a community, for accounting for failure, for the negative outcomes of particular strategies." Especially regarding failures, this aspect of mythologies can lead to conspiracy theories. The fact that the Macedonian nation has identitarian issues with several of its neighbors, has strengthened conspiracy theories, especially among the opponents to the agreement. According to them, the name Macedonia is too glorious, and the Macedonians, as Alexander the Great's descendants, have to fight to preserve it. Since all neighbors are against the nation, it means that there has to be some sort of global conspiracy to crush the nation. The name issue with Greece has, not without some accuracy, been used as a constant reason why the country had not progressed both economically and politically. Its resolution can be exploited

as a founding event in the birth of a new European nation, attributing all future improvements in life to it, but also with a clear delineation where the fault might be if things are tough.

To finalize, Schöpflin (1997) writes that the myth needs to have the strength to mobilize, it needs to resonate. It is open to question whether the new mythology of a European multi-ethnic Macedonian nation, with a founding event the name agreement with Greece, would survive, or will continue to be alien to most of the community. The numbers showed that, in a nation of roughly two million inhabitants, more than 600,000 support it. Even though boycotters claim that 1.2 million (out of the complete voter lists), are against it and wish to keep things as they are. The conflict between these two mythologies will continue to shape Macedonian politics in the coming years.

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HOMO SOVIETICUS OR THE AGENT OF CHANGE?
POST-SOVIET ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN AUSTRIAN MARKET ECONOMY

Sanja Tepavcevic

I. Introduction

"I was born in the Soviet Union, I come from Kazakhstan, and throughout the generations we were raised as *Homo Sovieticus*: throughout the generations we were told what we have to do, how to do, that one should not be different and that one should not think independently. With such heritage, it was extremely hard for me to start to think!"

This is how Aisha, the owner of a small Viennese real estate agency, describes the biggest challenge that she encountered when she arrived in Austria in the late 1990s as a post-Soviet immigrant. Indeed, the demise of the Socialist bloc generated the transformation of economic systems, which coincided with a gradual collapse in socialist political regimes, requiring social deinstitutionalization and the building of market institutions (Gustaffson 1999; Aslund 2007). These economic and political transformations were paralleled with mass migration flows within and from the former Soviet Union (Carment and Nikolko 2017). From the mid 1990's onwards, migration waves from and within the former Soviet Union (FSU) also included Chechens, Russians, Kazakhs and Ukrainians (Molodikova 2019; Ryazantsev 2015). Concurrently, over the last three decades the former Soviet republics have remained among the top 20 sending countries (IOM Report 2018). In 2019, the number of Russian citizens living outside Russia counted to 10 million, while migrations from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan were among the largest European emigration corridors (IOM Report 2020).

The (post-)Soviet citizens emigrated from places where the free market economy and privatization did not exist prior to the late 1980s. Nevertheless, since 2000, because of significant investments and business projects made by former Soviet citizens, especially in the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA), post-Soviet migrants' entrepreneurship found its way into international headlines as an evolving social and economic phenomenon: two of the most striking examples being Google's co-founder Sergey Brin (Leadem 2017), and owner of the British football team, Chelsea, by Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich (Kuznetsov 2011).

Sequentially, it attracted academic interest in the outer boundaries of various fields of study, such as post-Soviet migrations, outward foreign direct investments (OFDI) from Russia, and wider fields of immigrant entrepreneurship and technological innovations. For instance, exploring businesses of post-Soviet immigrants in Canada, Alexander Shvarts (2010) keenly noticed that "the important intellectual issue, is how did immigrants who grew up most of their lives in a state-controlled communist system where entrepreneurship was forbidden, learn to become so adept at starting businesses in a market economy?" (Shvarts 2010: ii). While Shvarts finds that the types of post-Soviet entrepreneurship differ depending on the time of immigrants' arrival to Canada, he does not put it to the broader context of entrepreneurship in Canada in general.

Similarly, Loren Graham (2013) examined biographies of many innovators originating from the Russian Empire and later from the Soviet Union and found that many of them emigrated from their home countries first to some of the Western European countries and then to the USA as the latter, with its' political and economic system, provided fertile ground for the development of their innovations.

Recently a group of scholars of business and entrepreneurship, Selin Dilli, Niklas Elert, and Andrea Hermann (2018) conducted a macro-level examination of entrepreneurship in various types of market economies by using the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) theoretical paradigm. Their findings suggest that the type of entrepreneurship heavily depends on the type of the market economy. However, their findings neither address, nor distinguish migrant entrepreneurship from the locally established ones.

In addition to these gaps, to date there is no study that systematically addresses the relationship between post-Soviet immigration and entrepreneurship in Austria, as a neutral country, a relatively old member of the EU, and one of the most developed European economies. Since being de-occupied by the former Soviet troops in 1955 and by establishing bilateral agreements with several Southern European countries and Turkey about providing relatively cheap labor from these countries (Kraler, 2011), Austria has gradually become one of Europe's major immigrant destinations. In addition, the Austrian capital, Vienna, has hosted headquarters of several important international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IEA), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2019 Austria counted up to 16.2% of population of immigrant origin (Austrian Government, 1 January 2019). The current year marks the fifth anniversary since the 2015 migration crisis, in which Austria was one of the major European "target" countries.

To address these important but to the date overlooked issues, the aim of this paper is two-fold. First, on the theoretical level, the paper bridges the gaps between disciplines: it synthesizes theories from three parallel bodies of scholarly literature – migrations, entrepreneurship, and political economy – by asking a general question: *How does a type of a market economy influence immigrant entrepreneurship?* – by examining immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria, which, according to the VoC paradigm represents a coordinated market economy (CME). Second, on the empirical level, the paper traces the emergence and development of post-Soviet communities in Austria, examining the paths of their entrepreneurship. In this way, the paper shifts the research focus from firms to individuals. Thus, the paper aims to answer the following research question: *In what ways does the Austrian coordinated market economy (CME) influence the entrepreneurship of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria?*

The paper represents theory-guided empirical analysis. The findings are based on Austrian official statistics, review of academic literature, monitoring of specialized Russian-language media in Austria and elsewhere, surveys of post-Soviet immigrants, and in-depth interviews with the most representative sample of post-Soviet entrepreneurs in Austria. The next section positions the research questions into the literature and derives hypotheses about the influence of receiving countrys' institutional settings on integration of (post-Soviet) immigrants and their entrepreneurship. The third section provides a description of major concepts and methods of research and data collection. The fourth section provides the answers to the research questions based on the analysis of data collected from primary and secondary sources and discusses the findings. The last section concludes by summarizing the findings, situating them into the three strands of literature, and proposing the avenues for further research.

II. (Post-Soviet) Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Varieties of Entrepreneurship in the Varieties of Capitalism - The Theoretical Framework

II. A. Post-Soviet Migrant Entrepreneurship

The collapse of communist-era economic institutions initially created an economic vacuum, in which numerous types of entrepreneurships emerged (Kshetri 2009). Some entrepreneurs that emerged in such a context were seen as "quasi-entrepreneurs, capitalizing on the opportunities created by the decay of the Soviet system, and the turmoil of the early post-Soviet transition" (Gustaffson 1999: 113). Therefore, post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship can be traced back to the transformation of the Soviet economic system and emergence of entrepreneurship across the FSU. A growing body of literature explores the Post-Soviet Russian-speaking diaspora's entrepreneurship across the world: examples range from the creation of ethnic enclaves in Italian cities (Matricano and Sorenttino 2014), to Russian female entrepreneurship in the Norwegian country side (Munkejord 2017). For instance, Russians who immigrated to Canada in the late 1980s without financial resources engaged in ethnic businesses (Shvarts 2010), while after 2000 the majority of post-Soviet emigrants moved to the countries of North America and EU with substantial financial sources and created businesses that operate in the mainstream economies of the receiving countries (Shvarts 2010; Tepavcevic 2017; Ryazantsev et al. 2018; Tepavcevic, Molodikova, Ryazantsev 2020). Based on these propositions, the further complex hypothesis can be derived: **H1:** The type and geography of post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship depends on the time of emigration from the home countries of the FSU. While in the late years of the existence of the USSR Soviet citizens usually emigrated with no financial sources and in receiving countries they became necessity entrepreneurs, who created ethnic businesses, in the late 1990s and on, the majority of post-Soviet emigrants moved to countries with advanced market economies with substantial financial sources. As a result, the later operate in the mainstream economies of receiving countries.

II.B. Immigrant entrepreneurship

Until recently, the relationship between migration and entrepreneurship has been explored mostly from the point of view of the impact of migration on cultural and economic landscapes in traditional accepting countries of North America and Western Europe. On the one hand, most of

the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship has focused on immigrants who had usually been engaged in one or other form of an ethnic enterprise, since in it they have had certain competitive advantages in comparison to the native population (Light 1984). Similarly, Portes (1997) finds that entrepreneurship of the Cuban diaspora in Miami serves goals and means in itself: thus, Portes characterizes it as "ethnic entrepreneurship". Additionally, the scholars focusing on immigrant entrepreneurship point out that immigrant entrepreneurship can be driven by a combination of positive factors related to the place of destination and negative factors related to the place of origin (Lee 1966). Positive factors in the place of destination include demand from an ethnic community for certain ethnic products and/or services (Orozco 2008), and investment opportunities in host countries (Rath 2006; Marchand and Siegel 2015). Similarly, negative factors related to the place of origin include getting better payment for the same job and better career/professional opportunities than available in home countries (Portes 1997; Waldinger 2009), but also possibilities for getting support for the development of innovations as driving motives from low-to-middle income countries to those with high income (Graham 2013). Based on these interrelated propositions, the following two hypotheses about immigrant entrepreneurship in developed market economies can be derived. **H2 reflects on the necessity aspect of immigrant entrepreneurship:** In search for better standards of life and investment opportunities than available in their home countries, people from developing countries frequently immigrate to countries with advanced market economies. Due to limited access to a receiving country's labor market, they become entrepreneurs. On the hand, **H3 reflects on the opportunity aspect of immigrant entrepreneurship:** To integrate and prosper in the receiving country, they invest their savings and use demand of their ethnic communities to engage in some form of the ethnic enterprise – serving the needs of their ethnic group.

Several works that focus on immigrant entrepreneurship in the post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe demonstrate that immigrant businesses increasingly operate as part of the mainstream economies of these countries (Tepavcevic 2017; Tepavcevic, Molodikova, Ryazantsev 2020). For instance, Brzozowski and Pedziwiatr (2016), who, addressed immigrant entrepreneurship in Lesser Poland, found that it operates mainly in the mainstream market. Based on this proposition, **H4 reflects on the integration into the host country economy of immigrant entrepreneurship**: Immigrant entrepreneurs increasingly operate their businesses as

the part of the mainstream market of a receiving country. This trend is particularly visible in the post-socialist countries of Central Europe.

Furthermore, recent literature on immigrant entrepreneurship demonstrates the detailed complexity of migration and entrepreneurial processes. Significant advancements in communication and transportation and their lowered costs have drastically increased socioeconomic mobility and enabled migrations for education, work, network and collaboration between countries and their markets. For instance, Ren and Liu (2015) found that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Singapore use mutually reinforcing strategies of transnationalism – the trend of combining immigrant status and experience to build business and create advantage by bridging sending and receiving countries – and integration to accumulate social and economic resources both in China and Singapore. This idea has further been developed into the analytical framework of simultaneous embeddedness proposed by Nazareno, Zhou, and You (2018). This analytical framework consists of two sets of three-levelled factors, one in the home country, another in the host country, focusing on how three-levelled factors in the home country interact with those in the host country: at the micro-level, premigration statuses may affect their business performance in the host country. At the meso-level, socioeconomic conditions in the home country (e.g., the expansion of middle-class families, labor shortage, favorable government policies) may affect the local labor market in the host country. At the macro-level, politico-institutional factors in the home country may enable or constrain transnational entrepreneurial ambition in the host country. Similarly, when examining female immigrant entrepreneurship, particularly in Vienna, Dunnecker and Cakir (2016) found that women entrepreneurs of immigrant origin in Vienna perceive their geographic mobility not only as the boundary drawing marker, but also as a qualification and a means of social mobility. Based on this proposition, **H5 reflects on the transnational mobility aspect of immigrant entrepreneurship, which is perceived as positive especially among female immigrant entrepreneurs:** Immigrant entrepreneurs use their migrant experience to build businesses that operate transnationally, in their host and home countries. As a result, they, and female immigrant entrepreneurs in particular, perceive their geographical mobility as a significant qualification and a means of social mobility.

Finally, the literature on the history of technology and international business focuses on the role of immigrant entrepreneurs in innovations and technology transfer (Graham 2013) and the creation of new jobs in the host societies, as well as technology exchange between host societies and countries of origin of the immigrant entrepreneurs. These scholars underline the efficiency of bureaucracy as the key factor influencing innovations and entrepreneurial activities (Asc, Szerb, Auito 2014). For example, Anderson and Platzer (2006) demonstrate that some of the largest US venture capital supported public high technology companies were founded by immigrants, such as eBay, Yahoo and Google. Based on these propositions, **H6 reflects on the role of immigrant entrepreneurs in transfer of innovations and technology and on the role of bureaucracy in these processes:** Immigrant entrepreneurs play a significant role in innovations and technology transfer between sending and receiving countries, but the key factor influencing their success is the efficiency of bureaucracy.

II.C. Varieties of Entrepreneurship in Varieties of Capitalism

The literature on VoC distinguishes among four major types of market economies: the two original dichotomous types are liberal market economy (LME), strikingly represented by the United States and Great Britain, and coordinated market economy (CME), with Germany and Sweden as the most prominent prototypes (Hall and Soskice 2001); the two additional types of market economies stand in between the original dichotomous types, and these are mixed (or Mediterranean) market economies (MMEs) represented by France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, and dependent (or Eastern European) market economies (DMEs) that emerged over the last three decades in formerly socialist Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia (Nolke and Vilegenthart 2009).

In LMEs competition prevails as labor and financial markets are deregulated, so that shareholder capital is available to firms in the short run, while labor is mobile. This deregulated institutional environment leads firms to engage with their business partners in a highly competitive way, thereby facilitating radical innovations (Hall and Soskice 2001; Dilli, Elert, Herman 2018). In CMEs, economic actors often engage with each other on the basis of nonmarket relationships. The institutions regulating financial and labor markets tie shareholders as well as workforces to "their" firm. This, in turn, leads firms to cooperate closely with their financiers and employees,

which makes the institutional environment conducive to incremental (technological) innovation (Hall and Soskice 2001: Dilli, Elert, Hermann 2018).

Building upon this institutional dichotomy, Dilli, Elert and Hermann (2018) apply another theoretical dichotomy in exploring types of entrepreneurship that emerge in these various types of market economies, namely Schumpeterian and non-Schumpeterian entrepreneurship that they define as follows: "While Schumpeterian entrepreneurship is characterized as risk-loving, based on radical innovations, and aiming for high corporate growth, non-Schumpeterian entrepreneurship is risk-avoiding and based on imitation, without aiming for corporate growth" (Dilli, Elert and Hermann 2018: 295).

In their macro-analysis, Dilli, Elert and Hermann (2018) look at the four types of institutions – finance, labor, education, and inter-firm – in these four types of market economies. As the receiving country of post-Soviet immigrants, Austria represents the CME type of the VoC-paradigm-based market economies; for the purposes of the present paper I focus on the general arguments that Dilli, Elert, and Hermann's (2018) made about the entrepreneurship in CMEs.

> Countries fall into distinct families with regard to finance-related, labor-market, education and training, as well as inter-firm institutions governing entrepreneurship. … CMEs (including the Continental and Northern European economies) are characterized by somewhat permissive financial and well-regulated labour markets, vocational education systems that teach specific skills to workforces, and reliable legal systems supporting inter-firm collaborations …While entrepreneurs in CMEs outrank their counterparts in all other economies in the extent to which they perceive business opportunities, this optimism does not fully translate into the creation of Schumpeterian entrepreneurial ventures (Dilli, ELert, Hermann 2018, 296).

Based on this proposition, **H7 reflects on immigrant entrepreneurship in CMEs in general, and in Austria in particular:** In CMEs (Austria included), economic actors often engage with each other on the basis of nonmarket relationships. Therefore, while well-regulated labor market and reliable legal system attract migrants to Austria, their entrepreneurship usually takes a non-Schumpeterian – relatively small, non-scalable and low-tech form.

Overall, based on the review of the three bodies of literature, the present inquiry tests the following seven hypotheses:

H1 - considers post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs: The type and geography of post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship depends on the time of emigration from the home countries of the FSU. While in the late years of the existence of the FSU, Soviet citizens usually emigrated with no financial resources and in receiving countries they became necessity entrepreneurs, who created ethnic businesses, in the late 1990s and on, majority of post-Soviet emigrants moved to the countries with advanced market economies with substantial financial resources. As a result, the later operate in the mainstream economies of receiving countries.

H2 – H6 consider immigrant entrepreneurs in general.

H2 - Necessity: In search for better standards of life and investment opportunities than available in their home countries, people from developing countries frequently immigrate to the countries with advanced market economies. Due to limited access to a receiving country's labor market, they become entrepreneurs.

H3 - Opportunity: To integrate and prosper in the receiving country, immigrants invest their savings and exploit the demand of their ethnic communities to engage in some form of ethnic enterprise – serving the needs of their ethnic group.

H4 – Integration into a host country's market: Immigrant entrepreneurs increasingly operate their businesses as the part of the mainstream market of the receiving country. This trend is particularly visible in the post-socialist countries of East and Central Europe.

H5 – Transnational mobility as a qualification: Immigrant entrepreneurs use their migrant experience to build businesses that operate transnationally, in their host and home countries. As a result, they and female immigrant entrepreneurs in particular, perceive their geographical mobility as a significant qualification and a means of social mobility.

H6 – The role of immigrant entrepreneurs and bureaucracy in transfer of innovations and technology: Immigrant entrepreneurs play a significant role in innovations and technology transfer between sending and receiving countries, but the key factor influencing their success is the efficiency of bureaucracy.

H7 – Immigrant entrepreneurship in CMEs: In CMEs (Austria included), economic actors often engage with each other on the basis of nonmarket relationships. Therefore, while well-regulated labor markets and reliable legal systems attract migrants to Austria, their entrepreneurship usually takes a non-Schumpeterian – relatively small, non-scalable and low-tech form.

III. Description of Major Concepts, Research Methods and Strategies

Depending on the discipline, major concepts used in this paper like post-Soviet immigrants and entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, home/sending host/receiving country, can be defined in different ways. As one of the aims of this paper is to synthesize the theoretical foundations from three disciplines in a country-and-immigrant-group-focused case study, the definitions of the major concepts will be used in their broadest interpretation. Thus, the *post-Soviet (im)migrants* refers to all former Soviets, who were born in countries/remnants of the FSU, and whose native language is Russian, or are bilingual. The term *entrepreneurship* is defined as "the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit" (*Business Dictionary)*. *Immigrant entrepreneur* here refers to foreign-born, self-employed officially registered person, regardless of whether s/he acquired Austrian or any other citizenship. The terms *sending country,* and *home country* are used in this paper as synonyms and are interchangeable, so are the terms*, receiving country,* and *host country*.

The data were collected in various periods between 2016 and June 2020. In the first phase, statistical information about the numbers of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria was collected from annual reports of the Austrian Government. Since the information of the companies' owners is not available as an open source, information about post-Soviet entrepreneurs was collected from the Russian-language websites about Austria and via informal personal communication with representatives of the post-Soviet communities in Austria. At this stage, the biographies of post-Soviet immigrants and entrepreneurs available on online personal and company websites were collected and analyzed. In addition, I monitored and analyzed Russian-language media content, including advertisements – TV, online magazines, and blogs (virtual and those located in Austria, Russia and elsewhere), and post-Soviet groups' social media in Austria. The most prominent and reliable source of information about post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs turned out to be *The*

New Viennese Journal which, as a major long-standing Russian-language media source in Austria, served as the main source of information about post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs, as most of them advertise their products and services there.

In the second phase, those post-Soviet immigrants and entrepreneurs, whose contacts were obtained during the first phase of research were directly surveyed by a semi-structured questionnaire. This questionnaire included questions related to immigration and integration in Austria, for example:

What were/have been the channels of your integration in Austria?

When interviewing post-Soviet entrepreneurs in Austria, I also asked some of the following questions:

What was the reason for becoming an entrepreneur in Austria?

What were the financial sources for starting your enterprise?

What principles have you followed in choosing your business niche and partners?

In this phase, I surveyed five post-Soviet immigrants, and three of them were entrepreneurs/business owners that I met through professional or personal networks, and the other two were the employees of an Austrian company and an international organization. With two of them personal in-depth interviews were conducted in Budapest, Hungary. To reach a maximally representative sample of the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria, I applied an innovative research method: I reviewed all Austria-based Russian-language media and thoroughly analyzed advertisements in them. In this way I had a clear overview of the sectors in which post-Soviet entrepreneurship operates. Then I contacted and surveyed two or three entrepreneurs from each of the represented sectors. Finally, I conducted biographical interviews with at least one representative from each sector in which post-Soviet immigrants in Austria were found, or with their close acquaintances.

As a result, the number of surveyed post-Soviet immigrants and entrepreneurs living in Austria reached 20. Significant information is that two thirds of them were female. All respondents were between the ages of 28 and 70, most of them (15) in aged between 30 and 60. During this stage of research, I encountered two obstacles. First, personal contacts with post-Soviet immigrants in

Austria were limited due to COVID-19 pandemic measures taken in all EU countries, including Austria. I have partially overcome this obstacle by conducting online in-depth interviews through different communication platforms, including telephone, WhatsApp, and Viber. Most of the interviews were recorded, and then translated and transcribed verbatim. Others took the form of question and answer sessions via online messages. Second, biographical data collected in this phase of research revealed that many post-Soviet entrepreneurs were reluctant to talk openly, especially about the financial sources used to establish their businesses and/or to pursue self-employment in Austria. This obstacle was tackled in the three following ways: first, respondents were recruited on a purely voluntary basis; second, their names were replaced by approximate description of their positions; and third, in the last phase of research the questions that formed the basis for in-depth interviews were formulated in a way to neutralize inconveniences, and to allow for open-ended answers. For example:
Did you apply / have you used any grants / have you participated in any programs for start-up, or for small business available in Austria?

Overall, out of aforementioned 20 interviews, the10 most illustrative examples are cited in this paper. Further in the text, when citing electronically recorded interviews, I refer to them as "personal interviews," while the notes that I wrote down as an interviewee was talking, I refer as "personal communication". All communication was conducted in Russian, electronically systematized according to the answers and translated into English. There were also five cases of significant post-Soviet entrepreneurs in Austria, whose businesses were worthy to address in this paper, but entrepreneurs were not directly available for interviews. In these cases, where it was available, I utilized interviews with these entrepreneurs published by Russian-language media (based either in Austria, or in some of post-Soviet countries) and discuss issues closely related to the research question addressed in this paper. The parts of the interviews that were used were translated into English. When, however, even such information was not available, I interviewed at least one knowledgeable acquaintance of these entrepreneurs. Finally, the data received was systematized and analyzed within the theoretical framework developed in the previous section of this paper in the way to answer the research question.

IV. Post-Soviet Immigrants and Entrepreneurs in Austrian Coordinated Market Economy

The results of my fieldwork revealed that there have been five general waves of (post-) Soviet immigrants in Austria: the first, and in terms of numbers very small wave, represent only several families of Soviet representatives in the international organizations located in Vienna, and post-Soviet Jews, who came to Austria in the second half of the 1980s after emigration to Israel. The second wave consisted mostly of Chechen refugees, who arrived as asylum-seekers in the early 1990s. Their approximate number in Austria is about 22,000, though this is not seen in official Austrian statistics as they arrived either with Soviet passports, or illegally (Molodikova 2019). The third wave consisted mostly of post-Soviet students, who arrived in Austria at the end of the 1990s. Though during my fieldwork I found that they came from almost all former Soviet republics and that their native language is Russian, the size of this wave is hard to determine, because most of them became Austrian citizens over the last two decades. The fourth wave of post-Soviet immigration to Austria took place between 2000 and 2013 and it consisted mainly of post-Soviet business and political elites. The striking feature of this wave have been their investments mainly in the real estate, hospitality and manufacturing sectors, both in Austria and in the neighboring countries. The last wave of post-Soviet immigrants arrived in Austria from Russia and Ukraine since 2014, mostly due to the conflict in Ukraine and the related crisis. These have been mostly middle-class Russians and Ukrainians.

The research also revealed that, though not representing one of the largest immigrant groups (they are much smaller than, for example, former Yugoslav and Turkish communities), the post-Soviet communities exist in almost all parts of Austria and they are quite well-connected. In addition to the groups in social media, most notably Facebook, *The New Viennese Journal* and the Russian Austria website simultaneously operate as ethnic businesses, and represent their virtual meeting points. These findings about the emergence and functioning of the post-Soviet communities in Austria confirms one general trend and one part of the H1 about post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs, namely: in the late 1990s and on, the majority of post-Soviet emigrants moved to countries with advanced market economies with substantial financial resources.

IV.A. Motives for Immigration to Austria

Based on the second hypothesis derived from the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship, I inquired into the motives for moving particularly to Austria. I found that these motives among the respondents are as diverse as their individual life paths. For example, there are only a few immigrants originating from the FSU who immigrated to Austria before the collapse of the USSR. "We moved to Vienna in 1987, because my husband worked at one of the international organizations" (personal communication, 28 May 2020) explained the owner of one of the Vienna-based Russian-language media. Within this group were also those post-Soviet entrepreneurs, who immigrated to Austria via other countries. "I was born in Dushanbe. I lived there for the first 17 years of my life … Then we moved to Israel. We spent 7 years there. After 7 years in Israel we moved further to Vienna, because we had a lot of relatives here. At the same time, the climate, friends, relatives – everything was much closer to us here in Austria" (owner of a jewelry shop, telephone interview, 6 March 2020).

On the one hand, the collapse of the USSR and the related crises prevented those Soviet citizens who had already moved to Austria to consider the option of returning to their home countries; on the other hand, it generated the first massive immigration wave from the former Soviet republics to Austria during the 1990s. First of them were the Chechen refugees, who received refugee status in Austria (personal interview, 14 November 2019). Based on my communication with non-Chechens post-Soviet immigrants in Austria, I found that most of them used the opportunity of free higher education to study and stay in Austria. "First I came as a tourist, and then I passed the exam to the institute of music as a music student" (owner of a real estate company, online interview, 24 February 2020). Similarly, another respondent initially came to Austria to study, and then stayed to work. "The path to becoming a lawyer is very long: one has to do an internship in a court for a very small salary, … then one has to work as an assistant to a lawyer – overall this practice before the exam to become a lawyer takes five years (owner of an attorney-at-law office, personal interview, 6 February 2020).

As pointed out above, the waves of post-Soviet immigration in Austria that happened between the 2000 and 2013 to a large extent consists of post-Soviet business and political elites. The most striking example was a family of a former Moscow mayor, Yuriy Luzhkov: his spouse and the richest Russian woman in the 2000s, Elena Baturina, purchased a significant number of various real estate properties across Austria, including some hotels in the center of Vienna (Bikova,

Euromag, 7 July 2011). As one migration consultant, a head of the Vienna office of the Russian migration consultancy company noticed, "about 55% of people who approach us have as their goal only to establish or operate their business in or from Austria. They want to have access to Austrian medical services and to receive a resident permit in Austria. However, they do not really move to Austria: they continue to live and work in Russia. For them it is like an 'additional airport'. 36% want to move their families to Austria … but they themselves still want to work in Russia, so to have two homes. And only 9% want to move to Austria for good. (interview, "PravDa" program, Public Russian Television, 24 October 2016).

This citation points to the search for a stable legal system as the major motive for the post-Soviet elites trying to get a residence in Austria: this motive is very different from propositions made by Rath (2006) and Waldinger (2009), outlining the search for better life standards and investment opportunities than available in home countries. In addition to these motives, one half of my respondents came to Austria as marriage immigrants. As one of them, the owner of one of the Russian schools, simply explained, "I did not plan to move to Austria, but since I met my wonderful husband, the question was solved in this way" (online interview, 5 March 2020).

The political situation in Russia and Ukraine, since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, generated a new wave of the post-Soviet immigrants to Austria. For them, as many post-Soviet immigrants of the previous wave, the search for a stable legal system and security was the main motive for immigration to Austria. As one of my respondents, an employee of the Austrian real estate company, pointed out, "We moved to Austria in 2014 for security reasons: Russian security structures started prosecution against my husband with the goal to take over his business in the coal industry. He said that the children and myself had to leave the country. My friend lived in Austria, she ensured me that it is safe and quiet here … Her lawyer helped me to find a job here, and I moved to work in Austria … and I took the children with me" (online interview, 9-10 March 2020).

Similarly, anticipating political prosecution because of the financial support to the Russian non-systemic opposition, one of the most successful Russian entrepreneurs and a former politician also moved to Austria where, according to him, the political and economic risks are significantly lower than in Russia (Dozhd, Russian internet TV-channel, October 2019). Overall, these

testimonies demonstrate that the hypothesis about a search for better life standards and investment opportunities as a motive for migration from the FSU seems too narrow when post-Soviet immigrants in Austria are concerned: motives like marriage, family reunion, the search for "safe havens," and attempts to avoid economic and political prosecution seem to be the most significant reasons for their immigration to Austria. Additionally, these findings point towards the attraction of Austria as a country with a relatively stable political and economic system.

IV.B. ***Motives for Entrepreneurship in Austria: Between Necessity and Opportunity, and Beyond***

The literature on immigrant entrepreneurship usually differentiates between the necessity and opportunity motives for migrant entrepreneurship. Simultaneously, it closely relates to the motives for immigration. While this dichotomy provides a parsimonious analytical model, the reality is usually nuanced, combining these major motives on different levels. The answers received from my respondents strikingly illustrate the complexity of these motives.

> I worked in the music school. There the working hours start at 2 p.m. and I worked usually until 9 p.m. When my daughter was born, this became very inconvenient, because kindergartens start at 7 a.m. until 4-5 p.m. … when I realized that I had to change something, another opportunity appeared: my former student … founded an architecture-real estate bureau, and I told him in one of our conversations that I planned to find part-time work in order to spend more time with my daughter. … he offered me to work part-time in his company. I started there with accounting, in parallel I took and finished accountancy courses, then he saw that I am a good learner, and he offered me to choose to do what I am interested in. I chose real-estate management and agency courses. … I wanted to continue. Unfortunately, the company lost a major client, and I started to look for something that I could do independently in that sector, so I founded my own company (owner of the real estate company, online interview, 24 February 2020).

This example demonstrates that the path to entrepreneurship went through a change in life-style related to the birth of a child, to the loss of employment due to the employer's bankruptcy: while

the former was the trigger for a career change and the opportunity for such change appeared, the later seemed more a response to short term necessity and the simultaneous search for a long term opportunity. Similarly, another respondent also first received the immigration permit and built his career as an employee of an Austrian company, and then used this experience as an opportunity to build an independent family business. “When I started to work at the shop, my boss hired a good lawyer, who made all the paperwork for me. I received a visa in one month, while usually that process takes 6 months … My younger brother also worked with me. And after 6 years of working in that company, me and my brother decided to open our own jewelry shop (owner of the jewelry shop, telephone interview, 6 March 2020).

Some of my respondents were post-Soviet citizens whose main motive to become entrepreneurs was to apply their education and qualifications, and the best way envisioned to combine these was to establish the school of languages and arts. “I have been educated for several different professions on different levels, including classic musicology, and pedagogy, the latter is my main profession. I am not the first generation of pedagogues in my family, I have been working in that sphere for a long time and I am very interested in pedagogy. … The School is how I see myself currently. To me it is …an international and interdisciplinary approach to the education. I think that one does not need to be a politician to unite people … to me it is important to provide them with live and interesting education”. (owner of the Russian school, online interview, 5 March 2020)

Thus, in this particular example of post-Soviet entrepreneurship in Austria, both immigration to Austria and entrepreneurship have been opportunity-driven decisions. Last, but not least, for one of my respondents, entrepreneurship, more than the immigration to Austria, was the way to avoid the poverty experienced in her childhood. Interestingly, she shares such trauma-led ambition with her husband, who is German. “Both of us, when we were kids, made a promise to ourselves that we would never be as poor as our parents – though his parents’ level of financial stability is incomparable to my parents’. It is rather your childhood promise to yourself that you will live better than your parents: you will have everything that you want and you will drive a Ferrari! For all of the entrepreneurs that I have ever met the main driver, the main motive has been the fact that they grew up without money!” (owner of the HR agency, personal interview, 5 February 2020).

The comment of another respondent confirms such a view, by comparing ambitions of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria with the local population. “We are hungry for a good life; we are hungry for many things! Austrians are ‘full’, they feel satisfied, they feel convenient. Convenience is the most important for them. Our people are hungry, and they have goals to fulfill, they are motivated (owner of a real estate agency, online interview, 24 February 2020)

As these interviews demonstrate, the motives for entrepreneurship are usually combinations of necessities and opportunities: from ambition to build a self-sustainable family business, attempts to earn more than a typical employee salary can offer, to making a better work-family balance, and overcoming poverty-related traumas from childhood. In addition, the quotes above also illustrate that, at least where the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria are concerned, the motives for entrepreneurship are rarely, if at all, related to immigration processes. Thus, these findings seem to contrast H2, that states that both immigration and immigrant entrepreneurship are driven by the search for better standards of living and investment opportunities than available in home countries.

IV.C. Types of Immigrant Entrepreneurship in CME: “Ethnic Enclave,” Mainstream Market, or Transnational and the Factors Influencing Operations in such Niches

In addition to necessity and opportunity, as shown in the theoretical framework section above, general literature on immigrant entrepreneurship proposes one theoretical trilemma: whether and in what situations immigrant entrepreneurship functions as an “ethnic enclave” market, part of the mainstream market of the host country, or as a transnational business? Concerning particularly the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria, these types are determined by the three sets of factors: historical, social and sectoral. My general findings show that the gradual growth of Russian-speaking communities in Austria prompted the founding of several Russian-language media. Some of them have existed in Austria for over two decades and operate as small culture-enclave-based businesses. Among them are *The New Viennese Journal* – an online and offline monthly journal that covers cultural, political, and business topics; and Russian Austria – informational news portal, that also serves as an online forum for the Russian-speaking diaspora in Austria. In addition, there are several YouTube channels and web portals devoted to the post-Soviet diaspora in Austria and the EU. In addition to news and analytical content, some of them are specialized on migration consultancy, while others make profits from the

advertisement, but usually they combine these two sources of revenue. Among them are “Expat Life”, “Focus-Austria”, and “Emigrant Guru”. The main customers of these media outlets seem to be a relatively large number of individual entrepreneurs providing medical, legal, beauty and other social services in both German and Russian languages, and a number of small construction companies. This finding completely confirms H3 that states that immigrants exploit the demand of their ethnic communities – in the case of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria these are rather cultural communities – to engage in some form of the ethnic/cultural enterprise that serves the needs of their ethnic/cultural group.

Exploring the reasons for the formation of such a cultural enclave market in CME in a post-Soviet context, but also to learn about the formation of (post-Soviet) immigrant-owned businesses operating outside of this “enclave” in Austria, based on the theoretical foundation of the immigrant entrepreneurship literature, I asked my respondents *inter alia* about the difficulties that they encountered in the process of immigration, integration, and in starting a business. In addition, I asked how they solved the problems and about the origin of their business partners/employees, and their main customers/clients. The answers demonstrate that, despite the motive of their immigration, each of the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria encountered bureaucratic difficulties in gaining immigration documents, be it visas, work permits, or citizenship. “With the bureaucracy is always hard in the beginning. One has to collect and to submit all the documents, it is really hard” (owner of a jewelry shop, telephone interview, 6 March 2020). Another respondent explained in detail the difficulties related to the bureaucratic process of immigration. “The only aspect that affects each immigrant here is the visa issue, that every migrant has to go through each year. It is especially hard to go through it in the migration offices here, in Vienna … If you have all the documents needed, you might be ok. They are very strict on checking each of your steps: where you have been, and what you have done” (owner of the real estate company, online interview, 24 February 2020).

The Schengen Agreement came into force in 2008 and these procedures have been applied to all third country nationals (TCNs) in the EU. Most of my respondents, however, have resided in Austria either before it became an EU member, or before 2008. This also results in a very limited access to the Austrian labor market for the TCNs, and all of my respondents refer to this as a significant difficulty in the process of their integration in Austria. “Austrians very strongly protect

their labor market. So, the priority is given to Austrians and EU citizens. Specialists from third countries are a secondary choice" (owner of a real estate company, telephone interview, 24 February 2020). Apart from the legal sphere, some of my respondents experienced indirect gender-based professional discrimination.

> I opened an attorney-at-law office myself alone, and my business started well off. Soon, I understood that my independent work was perceived by some people as negative: if I work alone on large projects – that is the first reason; the second is that I am a woman and I'm not taken seriously in this type of job among Austrians. … Austrians are very conservative, if compared to Russians. It is still widely regarded that a male lawyer is better than a female lawyer. When I worked for other attorneys, and since I work independently, I have heard such a comment many times. Therefore, for me it was important that one of my partners is a male. Once he comes with me to the meeting, I am better accepted, taken more seriously. In my view, this stereotype among Austrians is still quite present. (the owner of an attorney-at-law office, personal interview, 6 February 2020).

In contrast to this example, my other female respondents seem to notice some sort of alienation by the Austrians as a foreigner, rather than as woman. "The Austrian society is highly sterile, highly class-based. There are not only interest groups; there are divisions between the people based on 'ours' and 'others'. So it turns out, that if you haven't gone to kindergarten, high school, or university here, the chances to be accepted into various social groups are very low, except if you integrate with other expats, who, like myself, moved here relatively recently" (owner of the HR agency, personal interview, 5 February 2020).

Thus, while some of my respondents among the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria encountered different types of indirect social discrimination, all of them encountered some legal obstacles in the process of integration. Those, who immigrated more recently, have faced more difficulties in both aspects of integration. They seem to solve the social ones through networking and integration with foreigners in Austria, including the post-Soviet Russian-speaking communities. "I became a member of a creative organization 'Bereginya', a Russian-speaking female society (founded to help) in integration in Austria … everyone works on a voluntary basis. This helps me to build the networks to gain more pupils for my classes, as that is the best

advertisement… For each event they prepare a video, photos, recommendations, and create a portfolio… people start to recognize me and then they contact me to provide private classes for their kids. And I provide private Russian language classes and actor-master-classes at home (the owner of the film production company, personal interview, 6 February 2020).

In addition to this, while being a female in certain professions represents an obstacle in the Austrian market, this appears as an advantage in the post-Soviet cultural enclave market. At the same time, immigrant background appears as a comparative advantage for post-Soviet entrepreneurs in the Austrian market.

> Most of my clients – 95% – are men from the Former Soviet Union. … They were raised in a very different way than Austrians, in a society and ideology where everyone was equal. As a result, an absolute majority of successful men from the FSU consider that this type of work that I do is better done by women, because women are more accurate and they make less mistakes, and they are more patient. … If I did not have the knowledge of the Russian language, my career as an independent lawyer would be much harder, because there are so many lawyers. For me an assistant, who does not speak Russian is useless. In reality, there is an equal need for very good, grammatically correct with no accent knowledge of German and Russian languages (personal interview, 6 February 2020).

This interview simultaneously confirms two hypotheses proposed by the immigrant entrepreneurship literature: first, it confirms that immigrants exploit the demand of their ethnic communities to serve the needs of their ethnic group (Light 1984; Portes 1997), as reflected in H3; second, it extends the hypothesis about geographic mobility as an important female immigrant entrepreneurs' qualification proposed by Dunnecker and Cakir (2016) to the importance and advantage of good language skills in two or more languages.

My research of post-Soviet entrepreneurship in Austria demonstrated that, despite their small size, many of the post-Soviet businesses in Austria have been operating for more than one decade. The most striking example of the former is the Russian-language *New Viennese Journal*, the existence of which, according to its' owner depends on the frequency of payments for advertisement, which significantly decreased with digitalization of the media (editor's introductory statement, *New Viennese Journal* May 2020). Still, the specificity of another post-

Soviet immigrant's small business established about three decades ago – a jewelry company – has never operated in the cultural enclave market:

> There are tourists, of course, but the majority are locals … I have never make a choice of employees based on their origin. I had a good friend of mine from Syria, who worked with me. Now I have an employee from Poland, I also work closely with Austrians, and also with one Australian, so to me it is not a problem. … Even more important is that it is a good person, and then a good professional. Because one can become a good professional, but it is hard to learn to be a good person (telephone interview, 6 March 2020).

This finding demonstrates the contrast between Shvarts' (2010) findings from Canada, that businesses established by Soviet citizens in Austria in the late 1980s operate within the cultural/ethnic enclave market. Regarding major customers, I got a similar response from another respondent, the post-Soviet owner of a real estate agency: "All my clients are Austrians, German-speakers, because my clients are directed from my main job... This work gave me such a possibility to offer certain services to my clients. They – the company where I worked – dealt only with property management, while clients want to sell and buy and rent their property. So, I offer them my services in real estate trade" (online interview, 24 February 2020).

Apart from demonstrating a high level of integration in the Austrian mainstream market, the last quote reveals one important tendency among post-Soviet entrepreneurs in Austria, namely: to increase their incomes, they often combine their entrepreneurship with part-time employment in larger local companies. The testimony of another post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneur confirms that this is an increasing tendency. "I have an official contract with the tourist agency. The company offers short-term apartments for tourists. I have a part-time job there, 16 hours a week… the owners are Russians, and they own the apartments … it provides a stable income. … I have the movie about the musician that I am finishing now; then I have my authorized trainings that I provide as a member of the social organization, then I provide private lessons for kids at home, and I work as a manager at the tourist company. (owner of the movie production company, personal interview, 6 February 2020).

This finding provides important contributions to three hypotheses derived from the immigrant entrepreneurship literature: first – the necessity hypothesis (Portes, 1997) is to a certain extent

opposed by this finding, by demonstrating that immigrants become entrepreneurs not only due to a lack of employment opportunities in the host country or because of the opportunity in the cultural enclave market, but also because of the readiness to provide more services in more flexible ways than the locals; second, it extends opportunity hypothesis (H3), demonstrating that, in addition to a cultural enclave market, immigrant entrepreneurship can also be built equally on opportunities existing in the mainstream market of a host country and part-time employment in a local company – as the case of the owner of a small real estate agency demonstrates.

At the same time, on the other side of the spectrum of post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria, are relatively large businesses: one previously mentioned famous Russian business man applied his experience in the trade of high-technology products in Russia to the hospitality business in Austria. According to him, returns on investments in Austria are much longer-term than in Russia, but they are still worth it because of the relatively low political and economic risks. In his view, the most serious obstacle that he encountered conducting business in Austria was the lack of labor force. His solution to this problem was to employ workers from the Central and Eastern EU member states, notably Hungary and Romania (Business FM, 6 September 2019). In addition to this, the business provides services both to the local and international clients, therefore it operates as the part of the Austrian mainstream market, so it confirms simultaneously H1 and H4 hypotheses, that postulate that immigrant businesses, including the post-Soviet ones, increasingly operate in mainstream economies of host countries (Brzozowski and Pedziwiatr 2016; Tepavcevic 2017). A similar trend among other relatively large businesses conducted by post-Soviet entrepreneurs in Austria is confirmed by the post-Soviet owner of Vienna-based attorney-at-law office: “These businesses are very different, but they are not oriented only to Russian speakers. These are companies from hard industries, chemical industry, textile industry, jewelry industry … Given the political and legal situation in Ukraine and Russia, many are concerned that their businesses can be taken over there, so they decide to operate their businesses through Austrian companies. … most of the businesses operate in the countries of the former Soviet Union” (personal interview, 6 February 2020).

These large post-Soviet businesses that changed their jurisdiction to Austria while continuing to operate in their home countries confirm the transnationalism hypothesis (H5) proposed by the immigrant entrepreneurship literature, postulating that migrant entrepreneurs increasingly

operate their businesses simultaneously in host and home countries (Ren and Liu 2015; Nazareno, Zhou, and You 2018). Additionally, some small businesses undertaken by the more recent post-Soviet immigrants in Austria are Internet-based and also operate as the part of the transnational and even global markets.

> I am a transnational entrepreneur, but it is only because IT is such a sector: like it or not, you have to work on the global market. For example, I have a customer in Poland, I work in Austria, and I have the candidates from all over the world: Canada, USA, Philippines – people from all over the world are my audience. Different companies require different human resources, therefore the geography of my work is global. …… the people here are taught to live in their small cubicles, and they try to maximally contribute over 100 years by doing the same job all the time. The Austrian market, in turn, is the place where there are a plenty of people, who are able to "color the cubes only in blue". So, if you try among these people to find someone who could color a cube into a red, it is very hard. They would rather color the cube blue for another 300 years, than color one cube red. This is what I mean that if you try to live here, you won't integrate. If you are a foreigner with a medium level of financial resources, education, capital or anything else, there is practically no possibility to integrate into this structure (personal interview, 5 February 2020)

Therefore, apart from confirming the hypothesis of the transnational nature of the immigrant business, the quotation from one of my interviews with post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria also confirms H6, that states that the transfer of innovation and technology by immigrant entrepreneurs depends on the efficiency of the bureaucracy in the host country: in this particular example, Austrian bureaucracy and the economic system seem to impede this transfer and the scalability of immigrant businesses on the local and the state level.

Though operating from Austria, but targeting global Russian-speaking communities, Austria-based Russian-language online media operate as small but global businesses. As a result, this quote also suggests that the transnationalism of immigrant entrepreneurship hypothesis (H5) is highly relevant at least for relatively recent – namely since 2014 – post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria. At the same time, the whole spectrum of post-Soviet entrepreneurship in Austria explored in this paper, demonstrates that the Austrian economic

system itself rarely attracts much innovative or scalable business, including those founded by post-Soviet entrepreneurs. Even if such post-Soviet businesses are present in Austria, as illustrated by the later interview, it rarely operates as part of the Austrian market. The sets of reasons underlying such results are illustrated in the following comment of the post-Soviet partner of a Vienna-based attorney-at-law office:

> It is mostly because, in general, when a foreigner operates a business in Austria, it has a sad outcome. For many post-Soviet citizens, the biggest dream was to own a small hotel in the Austrian Alps. Many of them purchased such small hotels, but without even a basic understanding and without a good knowledge of the German language it is not easy to operate them. Then, they realized that their image of Austrian as an absolutely nice and just society was quite an illusion. There are criminals in Austria! If you don't speak a language, you will not be able to understand any of the rules and laws. It is also not a matter of fact that an interpreter will provide you with the correct information or an adequate translation. In addition, many people are not ready to work 24 hours a day. As a result, these hotels become unprofitable. … People do not understand the level of costs to operate a business of such size. They think simply to hire a managing director and based on that to receive a license. But they do not understand how much in reality they have to pay to make the operations of the business possible. They don't understand what kind of products and services are in demand in the Austrian market. They make their decisions too quickly, and such business activities usually end up very bad (personal interview, 6 February 2020).

While this quote confirms and further expands to immigrant entrepreneurship in CME the more general argument about non-scalable and low-tech entrepreneurship in CME proposed by Dilli, Elert, and Hermann (2018), it also demonstrates that the success and durability of immigrant businesses to a large extent depends on immigrant entrepreneurs' professional and language skills and the level of knowledge of the local market, including the taxation system. Simultaneously, the findings significantly extend H3, stating that immigrants invest their savings and exploit the demand of their ethnic communities to engage in some form of the ethnic enterprise – serving the needs of their ethnic group.

V. Conclusions

Based on the analysis above, several important conclusions about and implications for immigrant entrepreneurship in CME, post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship, and immigrant entrepreneurship in general can be made. Most importantly, the analysis proposed in this paper reveals one empirical paradox significant for studies of migration and immigrant entrepreneurship, especially in the context of CME: because of its legal and economic stability, the Austrian institutional system attracts relatively large numbers of immigrants, including those from the FSU; its bureaucracy, efficient in keeping this system stable, appears as an impeding factor when it comes to scalability of immigrant entrepreneurship and innovation and technology transfer between Austria as the host country, and their home countries. This finding is in the line with the argument by Dilli, Elert, and Hermann (2018) that CMEs are characterized by well-regulated labor markets, and reliable legal systems supporting inter-firm collaborations, but that entrepreneurs in CMEs do not "fully translate into the creation of Schumpeterian entrepreneurial ventures" (296).

As the analysis in this paper has demonstrated, most of post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria reflects this empirical paradox. First, for post-Soviet immigrants, Austrian CME does not mean only limited access to the labor market of the receiving country, but also limited options for entrepreneurship. As a result, most of the businesses founded and led by post-Soviet immigrants in Austria are oriented either to Russian-speaking communities or to international customers. As a result, most post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs tend to cooperate with and employ more frequently either their fellow post-Soviet immigrants, or other foreigners in Austria, than Austrians. In this regard, as the paper demonstrates, real estate and jewelry craft sectors partially represent exceptions: their customers are mostly Austrians. Post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in other sectors is increasingly transnational: it operates across EU and post-Soviet borders.

Second, in Austria the majority of post-Soviet immigrants came either to study, or as established business people, or as marriage migrants. For most of them the most important factor that influenced their decision to immigrate to Austria was the legal and economic stability of the Austrian system, and the opportunity to receive a good quality higher or post-graduate education

at a relatively low price. For the existing theory of migration and immigrant entrepreneurship this finding comes rather as a surprise, because most of the previous works in this body of literature (for example, Portes 1997; Rath 2006; Waldinger 2009) demonstrated that better living standards and the search for better employment and investment opportunities than available at home countries were among the top motives for immigration to economically more advanced countries. Simultaneously, this finding mostly fits the model of Nazareno, Zhou, and You's (2018) simultaneous embeddedness of immigrant entrepreneurship into the three sets of factors in host and home countries.

Third, the analysis in this paper revealed one more significant tendency especially among the female post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria that has not been discussed yet by the existing immigrant entrepreneurship literature: they tend to combine their entrepreneurial activities with part-time employment. This finding may appear as a logical extension of Dilli. Elert, and Hermann's (2018) argument concerning entrepreneurship in CME, for most of the theories on immigrant entrepreneurship it would represent rather a novelty, because immigrant entrepreneurship is usually seen either as a solution to limited access to a host country's labor market, or as an opportunity for investment and providing immigrant communities with certain ethnic products or services. For immigrants and TNCs in CME, both access to the local labor market and opportunities for scalable entrepreneurship are limited, such diversification of economic activities and income seems as the most rational solution.

Fourth, the analysis in this paper also revealed that theories of immigrant entrepreneurship built upon the "ethnic enclave" thesis remain relevant when post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria is concerned. As the analysis shows, post-Soviet communities in Austria have gradually grown in number over time, and this growth generated demand for many bilingual services, including legal and medical services. Therefore, apart from confirming arguments previously proposed by a number of prominent scholars of immigrant entrepreneurship about the demand of ethnic products and services as an opportunity for entrepreneurship (Orozco 2008; Marchand and Stiegel 2015) and geographical mobility as an important qualification especially for female immigrant entrepreneurs in Austria (Dunnecker and Cakir 2016), the findings of this paper extend this hypothesis to the significance of bilingual skills as a comparative advantage in relation to the local professionals.

Fifth, the analysis hereereveals that in CME, apart from a good knowledge of the local language, a thorough understanding of the local market and the legal system is crucial for a durable entrepreneurship, especially for immigrants. Tripitz, Groll, and Ghane (2012) made a similar argument about Russian investments in Germany, so it seems important for immigrant entrepreneurship in CMEs in general.

Finally, the analysis in this paper reveals that in certain professions in Austria, particularly in the legal fields, female immigrant entrepreneurs have experienced a certain level of gender-based discrimination, while others experienced a certain level of social exclusion based on their immigrant origins and foreigner status. It is important to notice that these are individually reported experiences, and further inquiry is needed to understand the level and the extent of such phenomenon in CMEs and other types of market economies especially in countries with a relatively large percentage of immigrant population. Overall, the present paper presents a firm foundation for further studies of immigrant entrepreneurship in a variety of market economies. While the present study provides important insight into the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship in Austria, it would be interesting to compare it with the post-Soviet entrepreneurship operating in other types of market economies.

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THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: A CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE: THE CASE OF POLAND

Svetlana Kucheriavaia

Introduction

Public diplomacy and soft power, as tools for achieving the state aims, have always been part of foreign policy strategies. In the contemporary world, these strategies have become inescapable for states as subjects of the international order. Today the use of hard power is limited as a way of persuading or achieving state aims or interests, regardless of its scope or target. Therefore, the field of soft power and persuasion through public diplomacy is growing faster than ever. States fund public diplomacy strategies and tend to establish networks and relations calculated for influence over foreign audiences. These strategies and mechanisms became main concerns of foreign policy departments all over the world.

This research focuses on one of the European Union Member States – Poland, as a main V4 international politics player. A positive image and economic stability is a crucial part of Poland's foreign policy strategy, but this does not mean that the country has always had such a positive image in the eyes of foreign investors as it does today. Depending on political and economic motives, the country pursues different strategies to achieve its interests through available soft power tools. The first part of this paper presents the theoretical background and defines *public diplomacy* and its place in the concept of *soft power* concept. The second part focuses mainly on methodology and hypotheses to better describe the outcomes in subsequent sections.

Theoretical background

Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

According to Joseph Nye, who coined the terms of *hard power* and *soft power*, the basic concept of power is the ability to influence others to get them to do what you want. There are three ways to do that. First is by coercion, that is to threaten them with sticks; second is to induce them or

pay them; and third is to attract them or co-opt them so they want what you want. This third approach is what soft power is about: "soft power – getting others to want the outcomes that you want, co-opts people rather than coerces them" (Nye 2008c: 95). In short, for Nye soft power is "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye 2008c: 94). It is not only about persuasion or negotiation, but the ability to entice and attract. In the context of states, this power is based on three national resources: culture, political values, and foreign policy.

When exercising soft power, states not only aim to influence other countries' political elites, but also their public opinion. This is where *public diplomacy* comes into play. Public diplomacy is one way to translate soft power into state policy, and thus it is a key instrument in soft power (Melissen 2005). Through public diplomacy, the activity to influence public opinion can be done. Joseph Nye (2008c: 98) emphasized the correlation between soft power and public diplomacy: "diplomacy aimed at public opinion can become as important to outcomes as the traditional classified diplomatic communications among leaders" (Nye 2008c: 99).

According to Pamment (2013), public diplomacy means the "communication of an international actor's policies to citizens of foreign countries" (Pamment 2013: 1). As the term itself suggests, the public or the citizens (non-state actors that may include citizens, civil society, NGOs, journalists etc.) is the main target of this approach, thus gaining their support and influencing their opinion are the main aims. Therefore, while public diplomacy can be part of state's strategy, the state is not the only actor in play. Often non-state actors and the public can be part of the strategy in supporting a certain state's public diplomacy approach, or they can also act independent of the state approach in affecting public diplomacy practice. What is certain is that currently soft power and public diplomacy practices cannot be separated from the role of public and non-state actors.

The main actors of public diplomacy, according to Jan Melissen (2005: 5), are non-official groups, organizations, audience in foreign societies and government or administration of a state. According to Paul Sharp, public diplomacy is the "the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented" (Sharp and Wiseman 2012). Simultaneously, we need to bring to attention the

definition of the concept by Edmund Gullion: “the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications” (Cull 2009: 19).

To summarise, the main strategy and aim of public diplomacy is to achieve one’s interests and goals through open communication, addressing and working with a foreign audience. It is also essential to point out that public diplomacy activities must be built on trust and credibility. If public diplomacy lacks these two factors it is rather considered as propaganda, which is built on disinformation, reinforcement and manipulation. Propaganda is “an attempt to influence the opinions of the target audience through transmission of ideas and values to specific form that is designed to serve the interests of propogandists” (Melissen, 2005: 17). Propaganda forces people what and how to think. It does not give any choice to the target audience, and propagates only one direction. Public diplomacy is based on communication (“two-way street”), while propaganda only tells what to think and does not listen to the other side. All the aforementioned factors help us to distinguish public diplomacy and propaganda. This thin border between the two concepts can sometimes be undermined and lead to confusion.

New Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy activities and strategies have significantly evolved. There was great discussion and practice of public diplomacy during the Cold War, but the conception and strategy around public diplomacy has changed in 21st century, in a distinction between the *old public diplomacy* and the *new public diplomacy*. The old public diplomacy, which was the diplomacy of the 20th century, is more an instrument used by state apparatus like foreign ministries and ministers in order to persuade international publics, ultimately aimed to influence their governments’ view towards state policies or standing (Pamment 2013). As such, the flow of information is one-way in which public diplomacy actors (in this regard, the state apparatus) controls the message they want to target foreign audiences. In contrast, the new public diplomacy of 21st century is not only conducted by states, but also by organizations of states and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes and behaviors, to build and manage relationships, and to influence thoughts

and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values. Official state apparatus are no longer the only players in communicating foreign policies. The flow of information is more widespread and pervasive, more actors are involved in international affairs and politics. Public debate, civil society and public interest groups influence on public diplomacy is increasing and unavoidable. This development leads to new ways of communicating foreign policies to various non-state international actors. Therefore, according to Pamment (2013: 3): "the new public diplomacy is dialogical, collaborative, and inclusive. It represents a break from broadcasting models and takes advantage of social media to establish two-way engagement with the public."

György Szondi (2008) clarified further the distinction between the old and the new diplomacy with specific categories and indicators under which old and new public diplomacy operate. The old public diplomacy has a background of tensions and conflict between states. The goal is to achieve political change in target countries by changing behavior. It employs persuasion and one-way communication, and communication is mostly done by official sources and traditional mass media. In contrast, 21st century public diplomacy is done in peacetime. Its goals include political and economic interest promotion to create a receptive environment and a positive reputation for the country abroad. Its strategies include building and maintaining relationships and engaging with the public, and employs two-way communication or dialogue. It also utilizes wide range of old and new media.

Research Aim, Methodology, and Hypotheses

The aim of my research was to study the impact of public diplomacy activities on the Poland's image as a country and its position on the international stage, and in consequence – its impact on the development of international entrepreneurship in Central and Eastern Europe. The interdisciplinarity of research is based on the combination of sociological research methodology and political science approaches.

Methodology

The research was designed to be conducted using the following methods:

- desk research (study of the media and Internet content, statistics, official documents, EU Communications and speeches of the EU officials, work at the iASK library);

- qualitative content analysis of official documents and reports;

- in-depth individual interviews with entrepreneurs and governmental officials (online, by telephone, via Skype and Viber, and during personal meetings);

- online focus-group interviews (via Skype or Zoom).

Due to unpredicted circumstances, e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent lock down, I did not conduct planned interviews with governmental officials. Moreover, the in-depth interviews were conducted via Skype and Viber instead of the planned face-to-face contacts with the respondents. The pandemic also forced me to develop a new methodological approach, such as online focus-group interviews organized with the respondents from the UK, Germany, France, and Italy.

I conducted 10 in-depth interviews via Skype and Viber with entrepreneurs from post-soviet countries: Ukraine (5 people), Russia (4 people), and Uzbekistan (1 person).

Due to the pandemic travel restrictions, I conducted 1 focus-group interview with 6 foreign entrepreneurs from the EU (and former EU-countries) doing business in Poland (4 people from the UK, 1 person from Germany, and 1 person from Italy), and in-depth interviews via Skype with 4 people from the UK.

The Methodology to Elaborate the Empirical Materials

To examine public diplomacy descriptive and comparative methodology were used. Then a structural-functional analysis was employed to study the forms of public diplomacy. System analysis was used as well.

Research Hypotheses

According to the research aim, I proposed to verify the following research hypotheses:

H1: The image of Poland as a target country for investment is not positive in the eyes of foreign entrepreneurs.

H2: The administrative barriers, e.g. bureaucracy in Poland prevents the formation of a positive country image in the eyes of foreign entrepreneurs.

H3: Entrepreneurs from the EU and former EU countries (the UK in our case) have a more positive image about Poland and doing business in the country than entrepreneurs from the former Soviet Union.

H4: Governmental institutions do not provide sufficient public diplomacy strategies and activities to improve the image of Poland in the eyes of foreign entrepreneurs and investors.

Research Outcomes

As a result of the conducted research, the hypotheses have only been partially confirmed.

H1: hypothesis is not confirmed. Conducted research demonstrates that the image of Poland as a target country for foreign investment is very positive in the eyes of foreign entrepreneurs from the EU and former EU-countries (the UK) and respondents from the post-soviet countries share the same opinion about Poland. Poland is perceived as a stable economy and safe place for future investment.

These statements are be illustrated by the following interviews with respondents who, thanks to Poland's positive image decided to do business in the country:

> *I had never been to Poland before 2007. I did not go anywhere further than Ukraine before. All was good. Why did I need to go out? The choice of Poland as a country for my future life and doing business was crucial, because* ***the country was considered as Europe*** *and, of course, everything what we, the Ukrainians, mean by that, e.g.* ***wealth, prosperity, high living standards, and good business development opportunities****.* (Respondent 1, from Ukraine, an owner of a Ukrainian restaurant in Warsaw)
>
> *We all expected huge investments from Germany after Poland's accession to the European Union, therefore, after looking with my own eyes at the* ***standards of living*** *in Warsaw, the* ***entertainment opportunities****, the night life, how many* ***people speak English****, we decided to establish our company in the capital of Poland.* ***The overall impression was very positive****. I have many Polish friends in London and they always spoke very warmly*

about their country. After coming to Poland, I understood why. (Respondent 3, from the UK, a hotel and restaurant owner in the centre of Warsaw)

I knew nothing about Poland before I came here, … my British friends living in Warsaw told me that this is ***a good country to invest in****. … The* ***country is stable.*** *I am a partner at deVere Group (an independent financial consultancy with a global presence) and I also own several restaurants and IT-start-ups in Warsaw.* (Respondent 4, from the UK, an investor)

As we see from the comments, Poland is perceived as "stable" and "a good country to invest in." Those characteristics are very positive and promising with regard to the future investments' prognosis.

The same opinion is derived from another respondent, this time from the former Soviet Union:

For me and my family Poland equals ***wealth and prestige****, in other words* ***Europe****… Poland is a member state of the EU, why should it look different from, for example, Germany or France? I was in Berlin and in Paris and I find Warsaw even better looking and better maintained than Berlin, especially when we are talking about its Eastern part… Poland is a rich country […], it is clean and safe.* (Respondent 5, from Uzbekistan, Uzbek restaurant owner).

H2: hypothesis is partially confirmed. The administrative barriers, i.e., the bureaucracy in Poland, makes an important impact on the image of Poland in the eyes of foreign entrepreneurs, however, it does not discredit the overall opinion about Poland as an economically stable country worth investing in.

I know Polish law, so I can manage. (Respondent 1, from Ukraine, an owner of Ukrainian restaurant in Warsaw).

The most important is to find a good lawyer here, and then you know what to do … After 2015 the situation changed a lot, however, ***I am not about to close my business****. I was very much afraid when the COVID-19 restrictions were implemented, however, a great surprise,* ***nothing changed in the construction business here.*** *The workers are working, the suppliers*

continue fulfilling their obligations, the work is ongoing … ***Poland is the most stable country*** *in my opinion as far as doing business.* ***We do not need to complete any new documentation*** *because of the COVID-19 alerts.* (Respondent 2, from Ukraine, an owner of a construction company)

H3: hypothesis is not confirmed. As I mentioned above, entrepreneurs from the EU and former EU-countries (the UK in our case) do not have a more positive image about Poland and doing business in this country than entrepreneurs from the former Soviet Union. They have the same opinions. For example, we can see this from the following interviews:

> ***I have always had a very positive image of Poland*** *and the Poles. Before year 2004 I was a bit hesitant as for starting my business in Warsaw, but after Poland joined the UE, I had no doubts about that. I have been running a successful business for more than 10 years and* ***I am not about to change anything*** *[…] Maybe, to open casino in the future?* (Respondent 6, from the UK, an owner of several pubs and restaurants in the centre of Warsaw)
>
> *What I like most about Poland is* ***economic stability*** *and* ***good climate for investment****.* (Respondent 7, from the UK, an owner of a chain of luxury hotels in Poland).
>
> *Poland* ***is the best country to develop construction business*** *in my opinion, because you always* ***know what to expect****. No surprising turns like in Ukraine or Russia, no criminal gangs, who will take your business after you started making good money. […]* ***it is European, civilized country****…*(Respondent 2, from Ukraine, an owner of a construction company).
>
> *Poland is a* ***safe place from the investment point of view****. People* ***feel more confident*** *about Poland as a country to set up their companies. Many educated Poles speak English and the Polish employers are quite good in my opinion. After 2004 I personally see less bureaucracy in Poland, and the electronic solutions implemented for the tax declarations and banking are very helpful.* (Respondent 8, from the UK, a lawyer).

H4: hipothesis is not confirmed. Conducted analysis demonstrates that governmental institutions provide sufficient public diplomacy strategies and activities in order to improve the image of Poland in the eyes of foreign investors: international trade fairs, public campaigns, international business and cultural events, language courses, scientific cooperation, international exchanges, etc. The involvement of non-governmental organizations in such activities is very important, because many events would never have taken place without NGOs. The role of the government can be seen taking a coordinating role and providing financial support (for example, grants from the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs).

The respondents when relating to the public diplomacy events organised by the Polish government and NGOs abroad and in Poland, mentioned the *Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój* conducted every year since 1992[10], which often was compared to the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland (because of its prestige, and delegates from around the world). The *Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdrój* is an initiative of the Foundation "Institute of Eastern Studies" in Warsaw, which works in cooperation with other NGOs, business corporations, state, regional and local governments, and governmental structures (including ministries) from various European countries.

Polish Tourism days were also mentioned, food and culture fairs, events organised by the Museum of the History of Polish Jews POLIN and the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Poland is being recognised and identified with its "typical features," like the dragon of Cracow, *piernik torunski* (a special cookie from the city of Torun), Gdansk as a Hansa city (mostly by the Germans), and Polish national pride.

The promotional message presented by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage is: "*Culture. Made in the EU. Powered by Poland*" and this is becoming more and more recognisable. Poland and its products are recognised and accepted, moreover they are associated with Poland and with the EU at the same time. Thus, the situation is much better in reality than I expected before conducting this study.

[10] See more information: http://en.krynica.pl/The-Economic-Forum-c22.html

The Image of Poland before Accession to the EU

The process of accession to the European Union forced the new member states, including Poland (which accessed the EU in 2004), to reshape their image abroad. Because of the fact that in the process of accession, not only parliaments, but the whole societies were involved (in case of referendum), public diplomacy needed to should contribute to a positive decision about accession to the EU. The "European campaigns" (as cases of public diplomacy aimed at non-Polish societies as well as public affairs at home, within the European integration topic) had the objective to support the classic measures of international relations and classic forms of diplomacy.

The first complex Polish public diplomacy campaign in 2000 aimed at reshaping the image of Poland in the EU states. It consisted of two programmes implemented during 2000-2003, which were addressed to opinion leaders and elites of the EU Member States. At the beginning it was important to identify the image of Poland as a candidate country, and its nationals, Poles, abroad. The aim was to prepare and adjust the public diplomacy strategy, taking into account the beliefs and needs of the target country, and their perception of Poland and Polishness in the European Union.

Surveys and content analysis of the mass-media were conducted in the selected EU countries most important for Poland's accession decision. According to the results, "Poland was an unknown country with predominantly a negative image, especially in the press" (Ociepka and Ryniejska 2005: 2). These findings were alarming, and expressed the strong need for the Polish government to create, first of all, a coherent strategy in order to provide different information about the country and, second, to develop the basis for shaping a new image of Poland and Poles in the minds of the most important EU countries.

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs defined public diplomacy at that time as all international efforts of the state directed at influencing public opinion in other countries. Because of the specifics of the Polish language, the document published by the Ministry used the term "promotion" instead of "public diplomacy". In Polish "promotion" is related to marketing, but it has a wider meaning and puts the stress on the creation of positive images of the country abroad, as public diplomacy does. The aims of the Polish "promotion strategy" was identified as the

government activities aimed at behaviors and attitudes in the societies of the other country, exactly what public diplomacy does. Thus, all public diplomacy activities directed to making Poland seen as an acceptable and welcome new member state in the old EU countries were supplementary actions to the traditional diplomacy, which is understood as government-to-government communication.

The main goal of Polish public diplomacy strategists was to create a positive image of the country in the societies, first of all, of the most influential EU players. In order to achieve this aim the first "*Framework Programme for the Foreign Promotion of Poland's EU Accession Process*" was introduced by the Polish government in June 2000. Poland implemented the public diplomacy campaign, utilizing "civilized persuasion" to direct the flow of information via mass-media and non-mediated channels to foreign countries in order to shape a positive image of the country and in consequence to make the achievement of international policy goals easier[11].

Poland has been conducting successful public diplomacy campaigns since 2000 via Polish Embassies in the target EU countries, NGOs and Polish diasporas, which also played a very important role as ambassadors of Polish culture and values abroad. The Polish economy grew much faster since 1989 than it was estimated and, therefore, the stereotype of "*polnische Wirtschaft"* (that meant "chaotic economy" and "no order") as a very common image of Poland in Austria and Germany developed into the picture of Poland as a fast-growing market economy. Positive image creation about the Polish economy was the key point in the public diplomacy strategy that time, what was also dictated by the needs of Polish export. "Poland has been trying to build an image of an "emerging economy" in Central Europe ("Flying Eagle of Europe" and the "Tiger of Europe")[12] (Ociepka and Ryniejska 2005: 10).

Looking at the current economic situation in the country and at the viability of the Polish economy (the only EU country who came out of the 3 economic crisis with GPD growth) we can claim that Poland managed to create a stable positive image of the country in the eyes of EU Member States, that was proven first by signing the Accession Treaty in 2004 and that the country is maintaining its image at a very high level. Placing the main stress of public diplomacy strategy

[11] For more information about this process and Poland's activities see, for example, Ociepka and Ryniejska (2005), Ociepka B. (2013b).
[12] See http://www.poland.gov.pl.

on the creation of the image of a stable economy is still profitable for Poland as the main economic power of the V4. Moreover, Poland continues its successful public diplomacy strategies today in order to achieve its international goals and ambitions as a reliable global actor[13].

The Image of Poland more than Ten Years after Accession to the EU

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its report published in 2015[14] believes that the country had achieved a good position within the European Union as a credible and reliable political partner with a sustainable economy. This image was achieved (at least to some extent) thanks to the smart implementation of public diplomacy in Poland's foreign policy.

According to the public opinion survey carried out, for example, in Great Britain, "Poles have stopped being an exotic nation for Britons. Intensification of contacts with Poland and Poles has helped Britons to form an opinion about them" (Fomina and Frelak 2011: 4). The image of Poles improved in the eyes of Britons also due to the increase in number of direct contacts between inhabitants of the UK and Poles and greater attention paid by the media. In this regard, it is also important to mention some public diplomacy activities undertaken by UK citizens living and conducting businesses in Poland. As a good example of broadcasting positive information about Poland, its history and culture to UK citizens living in Poland and abroad, there is the channel by Nicholas Richardson "HiPolska,"[15] where the author says, that "Poland has an advanced and modern economy" and is developing very fast.

Nicholas, a lawyer, has been living in Poland since 1994. In his blog and on TV he presents the image of Poland very positively, comparing it with his own country of origin, the UK.

In this regard it is worth also mentioning that "Britons who had contacts with Poland and Poles are more ready to accept them both as friends, family members, and also as fellow citizens or councillors. ... *The Polska! Year programme* helped to promote Polish culture to social elites and to demonstrate that Poland is not just good vodka and efficient workers" (Fomina and Frelak 2011: 5).

[13] For more information about this process and Poland's activities see, for example Ociepka (2013a, 2015, 2017).
[14] For more information see: Ministerstwo spraw zagranicznych (2015).
[15] See more information here: https://youtu.be/4EXv41n7r5o

Poland went through the global economic crisis practically untouched in comparison to its EU neighbours. It was the only EU country which demonstrated economic growth in 2009. Even during the economic crisis in Europe, Poland was engaged in promoting the solidarity of all European Union states. Premier Tusk initiated an informal meeting of Central European countries with the President of the European Commission to demonstrate that the new member states fully embraced the principles of the single market and supported the Commission's activities. Furthermore, Poland has also proved it is a serious and active player in European politics in the pursuit of its interests at the international arena. Among Poland's major achievements in the European arena is the adoption of the Eastern Partnership by the European Union. That was the first time an initiative proposed by a Central European country and a relatively new EU member was endorsed as Community policy. Poland also managed to use its EU membership to resolve problems with its eastern neighbour. For example, during negotiations for a new agreement between Russia and the EU, the European Commission accepted the idea of European energy solidarity as one of the basic principles (Fomina and Frelak 2011: 9).

An event which has had the most important consequences for Poland's position in the European arena was election of Jerzy Buzek as President of the European Parliament. At that time, the Lisbon Treaty came into force which considerably strengthened the European Parliament's role and reinforced its standing vis-à-vis other European institutions. Buzek's exceptional personality, and the activities he undertook to implement many institutional changes, made the former Polish Prime Minister the most prominent President of the European Parliament in its entire history.

Measuring Public Diplomacy Results

Measuring public diplomacy outcomes is a big challenge. The quantitative results of public diplomacy activities are much easier to measure, for example, by the number of event participants and likes posted on the web page or how many post-event media reports were published.

Public diplomacy activities are only one of many tools to shape perceptions. Often there is no clear cause and effect. Local and global political problem-solving weighs in considerably more than a series of seminars. Influencing the image of a country and its perception abroad takes a long time. According to the experts, as Baumler (2019: 21) suggests, "increasing awareness can

take one to five years, while shifting attitudes demands five to ten years. Additionally, documenting changes in awareness, perceptions and attitudes requires considerable resources."

Conclusions

Public diplomacy in the last twenty years gained considerable importance and became a common topic of research in Poland and abroad as a fashionable tool of foreign policy that has been implemented worldwide (Ociepka 2017). The frames for analysis of public diplomacy were predominantly fashioned by the neoliberal school in international relations (Ociepka 2017). Even the neorealists started to realize that states can implement not only military and economic power, but can also activate their soft assets to improve their security (Andrei and Rittberger 2015: 16).

The evaluation of public diplomacy activities of European Member States is a multi-dimensional process. The case of Poland is described as an example of a successful public diplomacy strategy implemented before Poland's accession to the EU and later. It is essential to point out that in Central Europe Poland appears to be one of the best examples of successful economic transition. The greatest challenge for diplomats engaged in public diplomacy is how to develop reliable and consistent mechanisms for implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of public diplomacy strategies. The research presented here demonstrates one well-functioning example that is extremely important. Thus, developed from the description of activities and possible challenges, practical advice for those involved in public diplomacy practice, alongside with the methods of evaluation of effectiveness of public diplomacy activities can also be introduced in other countries. This research illustrates that shared experiences, understanding and a convergence of ideas emerge from the creation of in-depth dialogue and successful cooperation strategies.

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WHY THE V4 IS SO FRIENDLY TOWARDS WESTERN BALKANS?

Sanja Angelovska

This paper aims analyze of the decision-making process of the V4 regarding the Western Balkan countries. Although, the research began very ambitiously, throughout the research process I came to realize this very interesting topic would take more time and should include more stakeholders than originally planned. With that purpose in mind, the analysis presented here is mainly theoretical. Many stakeholders were contacted for the purpose of the research, from foreign ministries` cabinets and embassies to regional think-tanks. Unfortunately, the responses I received were low. As someone involved in social-psychological notions of intergroup dynamics in international relations, I found the topic intriguing and complex, especially because it reflects leader`s beliefs, behaviors and perceptions. In order to access political leaders and opinion makers, it seems that only senior researchers with many years of experience and international reputation can reach out them. I, therefore, changed my tactics to reach leaders from lower levels of power and gain information from them about the leadership styles of people at higher levels. This was also difficult and complex because there is not much data available.

It`s been a public secret that the Western Balkan (WB) region and the Visegrad 4 (V4) maintain friendly and respectful relations with each other, or at least give that impression. The declared support of the V4 for the WB countries has been consistent throughout the years. Although as my analysis below will show, individual country efforts have not been equal towards the Western Balkans, still their attitudes, interests and positions do not differ much.

As I went deeper into the research process, I realized the topic demands more time and resources as well as contacts. That is why I decided to limit the scope mainly to a theoretical background by using secondary data. Dominantly the literature I consulted for the theoretical background and framework of my analysis comes from American researchers who have done research on the foreign relations between the U.S. and Afghanistan and U.S. political leaders and their respected approaches and perceptions for fighting global terrorism. This approach is still considered still relatively new and should be duplicated in other situations worldwide. As for my research topic,

there is not much research done in this direction. The literature I consulted offers some data but was not as concrete as the data from the other side of the Atlantic. This work has thus become a mosaic constructed with pieces of other relevant research that has been done.

What does Theory offer to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)?

Theory is need in FPA to explain how and why policy is made, and assumes that human beings are the source of much of the behavior and most change in international politics. (Dorani, 2019).

Within the frame of FPA, another vital model is included – the The Psycho-Social Milleu (PSM) Approach which I found essential for my analysis. Founded by Harold and Margaret Sprout, this approach claims that foreign policy can be explained by referring to the psychosocial milieu ("the psychological, situational, political, and social" contexts or environments) of those who are involved in decision-making processes.

For the psychological aspect of the PSM Approach, the researcher focuses on the decision-makers' minds (that is, what happened in the minds of policymakers during the decision making). This includes personalities, beliefs, attitudes, values, experiences, emotions, style, memory, national and self-conception. Especially under certain conditions – notably, high stress, high uncertainty, war, crisis, or the dominant position of the head of the state (Smith et al. 2008) – individual characteristics are claimed to play an important part in terms of understanding why certain policies were made. Individual characteristics are considered to be the "integral aspect" of the decision-making process (Dorani, 2019).

The theory and claims are supported by the fact that beliefs and images develop over years. Personal experience plays a crucial part in the development. Wayne (2011) writes: "As people become aware of the world around them and seek to understand it, they formulate views that frame the mindset from which their judgments are made. Their views and beliefs also shape their perceptions of reality; they are guides to decision making". This perspective as essential for analyzing the decision-making process since both bad and good decisions have been made as a result of leaders` projection of personal characteristics and beliefs onto the decision-making process. Somehow this kind of analysis is neglected, especially if we talk about Europe, which is my research subject. For the social aspect of the PSM Approach, FPA concentrates on how

societal and national context or national attributes can shape the environment in which policymakers operate, and how then the environment influences policymakers. These attributes include culture, conception of the nation, history, geography, economy, political institutions, and military power (Smith et al. 2008: 23; Hill 2003: 117).

The Visegrad Group proudly stands together in many processes before and after joining the of Euro-Atlantic alliance. However, after joining the EU joining its focus wasn`t necessarily oriented toward the Western Balkans countries. One reason is that its priority toward the Eastern Neighborhood of the EU were Ukraine and Romania (Stradzay 2012). The interest and direct support for the Western Balkan countries came later since this region at the time was still in chaos – politically, economically and bilaterally with changing borders.

Stradzay (2012) analyses the relations between the Visegrad 4 and Western Balkans on three levels: political cooperation, sharing of institutional and procedural know-how, sectoral cooperation. The Visegrad 4 have not developed a large institutional structure. Communication is maintained at the level of foreign ministries, but it still has instilled hope for the leaders of the Western Balkans. Following the example of the Visegrad Fund, a Western Balkans Fund was also created aiming to target people-to-people projects and programs.

An analysis of the presidency programs and annual reports for the period of 2003-2004 and 2011-2012 from Stradzay shows that sectoral cooperation between the Visegrad Group and Western Balkan countries for these periods was not that intensive. In fact, as he claims there was a number of partners from regions other than the Western Balkans whose cooperation with the Visegrad Group is more regular and intensive. Among these countries he mentions that Bulgaria and Romania played an increasingly important role in the V4+ format. Stradzay claims that the cooperation of the Visegrad Group with the Eastern Balkans overshadowed cooperation with the Western Balkans. He highlights that the cooperation with Bulgaria and Romania developed significantly after the accession of the two countries to the EU from this point of view, and he predicts the same for Croatia, which turned out to be true. .

In a more recent work, Griessler (2018) considered each states' interests and policies and the evolution of V4 objectives. Her underlying hypothesis is that the foreign policy related behavior of individual states is shaped by certain roles they assume and by their national interest. She

analyzes the presidencies between 2014-2018. Cooperation with the Western Balkan states was identified as a priority for the V4 who pledged to support the Western Balkan countries in their efforts to gain EU membership. They would also like to be models for the Western Balkan region. Her research further details the theory that addresses the idea of a state`s role in the context of foreign policy. In this regard, the V4`s foreign policy priorities and decisions are the work of states that have particular a political and historical background and are embedded in a system of international organizations and regulations. Role theory, with its focus on identity, can explain the foreign policy choices of the V4 as an organization. The explanation for why a concrete state makes a decision may become clear if we take into account its self-conception, self-image and identity as well as its capacities, self-referential processes and the context in which operates. States assume foreign policy roles that are defined by their own ideas of what their tasks and obligations should be as well as by other countries` explanations. The explanation continues that in this respect, state behavior is influenced by the international community, international organizations and neighboring states. Within the foreign policy sphere, a state`s conduct (role performance) also reflects its sense of its national role; the later refers partly to its identity, cultural heritage and history (Cameron and Breuning 2012), and partly to its relations with the international community. Later, this translates into a division into an "ego" dimension defined as the state`s identity and the "other" dimension reflecting others' expectations and the state`s position in the international system.

This notion of a "role" originates from the disciplines of sociology, social psychology and anthropology; it is tied to a constructivist approach and is relational. States distinguish themselves from one another and at the same time require one another`s recognition (Benesh 2015). The relations among states shape and influence their roles as foreign policy actors. Moreover, their world views are affected by social and cultural structures in the domestic and international environments, and those structures also affect policy decisions (Breuning 2012). Most scholars who use role-based policy theory are located in American universities and tend to indentify closely with cognitive approaches coming out of political psychology. The difference between the FPA and IR is that the first uses the informed role theory from social psychology while IR scholars are more firmly grounded in sociology.

Mikulova (2013) argues that since the V4 shook off the Soviet yoke and topped a decade of successful political and economic reform by joining the West in its most exclusive clubs (the EU and NATO), they have begun to pursue their own objectives, and they have distinguished themselves as actors on the world stage. In the realm of foreign policy this means that they have been busy settling scores with former imperial overlords, courting mentors and protectors, learning how to articulate and defend their interests, and building their reputations by crafting new foreign policy brands.

The Western Balkans includes Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia. Slovenia may belong to the region geographically but politically and economically it is entirely is integrated in the EU. Below is a short analysis of the individual V4 state perspectives toward the Western Balkans. Is each state equally interested in the Western Balkans? The answer is absolutely no, but when it comes to decisions with a consensus there are not big deviations.

Poland`s Perspective toward the Western Balkan Countries

Adam Balcer (2005) states that Poland`s position and interest towards the Western Balkans is not as intense as it is for Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary. He proves that Poland is less engaged in the Western Balkans when compared to the other V4 countries. This he says is justified, however, since the primary focus of the V4 Four as a whole earlier was still concentrated on the neighboring Eastern countries like Romania and Ukraine. In the end, he concludes that it is in the interests of all members to support the EU and NATO integration of the Western Balkan countries. Fifteen years later, unfortunately, things haven`t changed drastically. The only country from this region that joined the EU is Croatia. In the meantime, Macedonia has joined NATO and so is the case with Albania. Further success in the Western Balkans has not occurred, and moreover old wounds are reopened again. Poland`s foreign policy towards the Western Balkans has remained within the mainstream policy of the EU and NATO towards the region, without showing, “more than necessary” activity (such as its own mediating initiatives and reform projects, proposing candidates for key posts, or active support for the Balkan states in the international arena). Unlike Poland, the other countries of V4 – particularly Hungary and Slovakia – declared that the Western Balkans remain an important region in their foreign policy. The most striking example of this

difference was the EU's summit in March 2005 when the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia were the main supporters of the commencement of negotiations with Croatia, while Poland remained one of the toughest advocates of the postponement the accession talks with Zagreb (Balcer 2005). As we continue it will become clearer that the V4 countries in their shades of support for the Western Balkans.

Hungary's Perspective toward the Western Balkan Countries

Beáta Huszka's (2010) research on Hungary`s role in the EU integration of the Western Balkans retrospectively does not offer an optimistic view. Although there is a general perception of Hungary's positive and friendly attitude towards the Western Balkans, she claims that this is only declaratively. In her research describing Hungary`s role during its presidency in 2010, she argues that Spain during its presidency showed greater interest towards the WB, meaning there were two high level meetings related to the Western Balkans during its tenure in March 2010 in Brdo-Slovenia and in May in Sarajevo even though for Spain the region is certainly less of a priority. Hungary has been an ardent advocate of the EU and NATO integration of the Western Balkan states, which naturally became one of the priorities of the presidency's program. Speculating about the Hungarian presidency back in 2011, several questions emerged regarding its Western Balkan agenda. In principle, the presidency is an ideal opportunity for Hungary to demonstrate its commitment to the Western Balkans and to shape the EU`s external actions by adding a new vision and impetus, and by placing weight on this issue in the EU bodies and policies. For Huszka, the period of the Hungarian presidency offers the chance to refute the often voiced criticism that Hungarian Balkan policy only exists in political statements, and lacks initiatives with real content. Although Hungary became one of the most active and vocal advocates for its southern neighbours accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures, if failed to assume a leadership role in the formulation and implementation of EU strategies for the region. She concludes that in practice, Hungarian foreign policy has been maneuvering in a relatively narrow political space in the Balkans, and as a result Hungary has been generally, following rather than shaping EU policy.

As critiques tend to argue Hungarian foreign policy towards the Western Balkans at present is a mantra composed essentially of political statements about the need for the region`s speedy Euro-Atlantic integration (Huszka 2010). These judgements are justified with the actuality of only

Croatia's accession fom the region of the Western Balkans. Although in some cases bilateral and internal issues have arisen, the advocacy and support stated 10 years earlier has moved no further than declarations.

However, in 2020 Hungary is again looking at the Western Balkans as it heads the Green Fund for the Western Balkans. This governmental project is about "harnessing Hungarian know-how to kickstart sustainability in a region that sorely needs it." [16] This step is justified and explained using some facts about the Western Balkans related to high records of air pollution with Sarajevo as the worst, and Skopje not much behind it. A sum of 1.2 million euros will be provided by donors and groups across the V4 for this fund. Their further justification for such step is that in their perception Balkan states worry they will be left behind by the European Green Deal, the Brussels plan to make Europe the first climate neutral continent in the world by 2050.

László Orlos, the head of this initiative, stated that the Polish government once suggested the establishment of a Visegrad Development Bank, which has not yet materialized. But Orlos sees a chance to create a V4 fund or multi-donor green fund for the Balkans, by 2022, to bolster green projects in the region while benefiting V4 companies.[17] The overall project is an initiative put forward by the Hungarian government in 2019 as a "win-win" solution for both regions. At the present time, I assume this initiative is on hold because of the Covid-19 pandemics.

One of the reasons why Hungary has taken such a pro-active position toward the Western Balkans is justified by its common border with Croatia as well Serbia, and the presence of Hungarian minorities in these countries (especially in Serbia) and shared historical heritage make it the most engaged in the Western Balkans among the V4 (Balcer 2005).

[16] Retrieved from: https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/11/hungarys-green-fund-for-western-balkans-a-win-win/
[17] Retrieved from: https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/11/hungarys-green-fund-for-western-balkans-a-win-win/

Czechia's Perspective toward the Western Balkan Countries

Identity is analyzed on the basis of two main sources: the discourse of the elites on "who we are" and "what we believe in" and its transition into foreign policy priorities as defined in the key policy documents with a particular focus on Southeastern EU neighborhood (Weiss 2001). Eastern Europe was largely missing on the radar of Czech foreign policy until the mid-2000s. Separated from the region by other Central European countries, namely Slovakia and Poland, the Czech Republic rather focused on its relations with its neighbors, and the accession process, not on the Balkans. Czech foreign policy after the stabilization of the Central European region during the 1990s and the accession of the country into NATO is formulated largely in accord with its identity. There is not much data on the relations between Czech Republic and the Western Balkan countries. Rather, its positions are clear and consistent, with a greater emphasis on the Eastern Neighbourhood Partners and sharply adhering to the EU values and laws.

Slovakia`s Perspective toward Western Balkans

Slovakia's perspective, through the research lens of Július Lőrincz (2013), provides a general analytical approach to the context of war in the Western Balkans countries. Slovakia`s perspective is rather loyal especially to the Slavic countries in the Western Balkans.

> Slovakia`s interest in this part of Southeastern Europe has been fully expressed (both at the state level and in civil society) in various activities of our foreign policy, not only within the countries of the Western Balkans, but in the wider European and global context as well. Without a doubt Slovakia's engagement was initially motivated by its efforts to contribute to the solving of a crisis that had evolved into open war in its own neighborhood (Lőrincz 2013).

Slovak foreign policy was focused mainly on supporting reforms, the rule of law and integrating these countries and their societies into Euro-Atlantic structures. Besides this, Lőrincz introduces the historical dimension of having the same origin with the Slavs and sharing a lot culturally especially with Serbia and Montenegro. From the V4, Slovakia probably shares the most with the Western Balkan Slavic countries. I mention intentionally Slavic countries because in a way non-Slavic countries, such as Kosovo and Albania, have been neglected by Slovakia. Lőrincz accents

the nationalist regime in Serbia in the 1990s and Slovakia`s support for more liberal rule. Also, in his work he mentions the influence of the non-governmental sector today compared to the socio-political context in Slovakia when nationalistic regimes were in power. What is interesting in this analysis is his awareness of the focus of Slovakia`s non-governmental sector and its established network of contacts, as well as the activity of official Slovak foreign policy that may create the impression that when it comes to the relations and advancement of Slovakia within the Western Balkan region, there is a kind of Serb-centrism taking place. He explains that the re-stabilization of the Western Balkans cannot be achieved without the active role and presence of Serbia. Additionally, he says there is a need to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The signing of an agreement for economic cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia, mediated and supported by the American president Donald Trump and his administration, is a step in this direction.

The Latest News from the V4 regarding its Position on the Western Balkans

The annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and the Western Balkans, organized under the Czech Presidency of the V4, was held on 27 February 2020, in Prague. The meeting was also attended by the Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia representing the Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, and the Secretary General of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic 2020).

The statement given on that occasion was as follows:

> The meeting in Prague provided the Visegrad Four's ministers with the opportunity to express their long-term and unequivocal support for the efforts of the Western Balkan partners to join the EU. The V4 remains committed to preserving and reinforcing the credibility of the EU enlargement process that is the best tool for ensuring stability, security, and prosperity in the region. EU membership of the Western Balkan countries is a joint strategic goal of the region and the EU and in the end it concludes: The participants in the meeting were briefed by the Executive Directors of the International Visegrad Fund

and the Western Balkans Fund on projects aimed at strengthening civil society in the region and on the ongoing cooperation between the two institutions.

Furthermore, the ministers took stock of the achievements and plans for the future development of the Western Balkans Fund that is a unique institution of regional cooperation based on the successful model of the International Visegrad Fund. The V4 remains committed to supporting the Western Balkans Fund and its mission in the region. In Prague, the V4 ministers and the partners witnessed the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding that will allow the technical assistance provided to the Western Balkans Fund via the International Visegrad Fund to continue in the period ahead (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic 2020).

Concluding Remarks

As a researcher, this micro-analysis is only a beginning, and I naively looked at the V4 as countries that have always been friendly towards the Western Balkan countries. If we breakdown each V4 state separately, we can easily notice that each country has decided which "child" from the Western Balkans to adopt so they can raise it in a more European way. The root causes of the positivity that overshadowed the certain favoritism for certain countries is being developed through affective foreign policy. The reasons for such closeness differ from country to a country, with the exception of Poland, where interest is more rationally-based than in countries with a common history. Hungary is more loyal to the countries where a Hungarian minority lives and Slovakia is definitely still nurturing relations with the countries with obvious Slavic origin and traditions, especially with Serbia. Czechia looks like the most rational and, at the same time, arrogant member of the group, holding a position that looks directly at Western Europe. But the truth is that this group is focusing on the priorities it aspires to achieve. Among the V4 countries, it is also known that they don`t interfere in internal affairs and they don`t discuss further what they disagree about. So, maintaining a positive attitude and friendship toward the Western Balkans sometimes for the V4 is just an effective declarative foreign policy, without taking concrete steps. In some cases, some chose to it is crucial to mention the role of leaders – which it`s not a direct subject of this analysis but at some ppoints has affected it. Individual states maintain better bilateral relations if at the current moment leaders with same or the similar

political orientation are in power. This has happened mainly in the period of 1990s and even today.

Inevitably, countries like Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania have to be mentioned as they have been neglected in terms of priority to other countries. The most present and consistent support comes from Slovakia, but only in the guise of shared Slavic origins. In this analysis we can see some of what lies behind the scenes and that a more proactive role of V4 is needed especially to focus on Macedonia these days concerning its negotiations for the EU joining process: because of shared (Slavic) origins, because of national minorities living in these countries, because of economic interests and for stability in a neighboring the region.

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