

## MIGRANT VOICES IN VIENNA'S CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

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At the time of writing this paper, the exploratory study, which will be the basis for my Athens presentation, is still in the making. In this paper, I am formulating questions, the answers to which I hope to give in October in the oral history session. Therefore this paper is to be understood as a 'teaser' for my presentation. It lays out the background information, which will make it easier to discuss the points I am going to present in more depth at the Urban History Conference 2004.

### **A Pacifying Multicultural Image**

There is a paradox in Vienna's historical image. On one hand, Vienna appears to be a multicultural city in the memory stored in mainstream discourses and in historical knowledge production. On the other hand, migrants do by tradition not figure as autonomous protagonists in historical accounts of Vienna. Rather, they are only mentioned on the occasion of their arrival to certain city quarters – what remains are Jewish, Bohemian, Hungarian etc. 'cultural influences' in Viennese slang and cuisine. Of course, due to its vast size, especially the influx of population from Bohemia and Moravia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is stock material of traditional Vienna historiography. However, only in specialized accounts are these treated as protagonists with their own agency in history. Most prominent is the dispute around the Czech school movement in the 1890ies under the German nationalist mayor Karl Lueger (1844–1910). Migrants other than the Czechs are usually completely absent from historical accounts. In the case of migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, who are the main topic of this paper, handbooks contain several entries on the inhabitants of the *Ratzenviertel* (the Ratzen quarter), which are believed to have been Serbs, and those of the *Krowotendörfl* (the Crobatian village), which are supposed to have either been Slovaks or Croats.

An anecdote may illustrate the disjunction of migrant history from mainstream memory in Vienna: mayor Karl Lueger, 'founder' of modern Vienna and his family lived in the same house as the family of Vienna based Serbian linguist, ethnographer and national hero Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864). This coincidence went completely unnoticed both in Serbian and in Austrian/Viennese accounts on the period and about both men. The fact that Lueger held a speech when Karadžić's body was exhumated and transferred to Belgrade in 1897 (Lueger's first year officially in office), is only worth a footnote in Serbian historiographies. (Lueger 1898) Both men are emblematic in the respective historical discourses of Vienna and Serbia.

In more recent accounts, immigration to Vienna has become more prominent. Many authors tend to describing the city as cosmopolitan, implicitly drawing parallels to North American urban imaginations.<sup>1</sup> Such descriptions are often well intended but bear the problem that there is a tendency to concentrate on achievements and contributions of elite migrants (including career migrants) and to set these metonymically for whole populations. This strategy was applied both by

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<sup>1</sup> There is also research on external migration from Austria-Hungary especially to North America, e.g. in the project *Migration aus der Habsburgermonarchie nach Übersee* conducted by Josef Ehmer with Annemarie Steidl and Hermann Zeitlhofer. Cf. Annemarie Steidl, "Migration to North America and Internal Migration in Late Imperial Austria," *History and Computing*, ed. Matthew Wollard ([2003]); Annemarie Steidl, "Regionale Mobilität der städtischen Handwerker. Die Herkunft Wiener Lehrlinge/Lehrmädchen, Gesellen und Meister im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," phil. Diss., 1999.

Austrian authors interested in tracing the multicultural past (e.g. “Wir: zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der Zuwanderung nach Wien” 1996) and by historians from migrant communities, who intend to write a representative history of their respective community (e.g. “Auf den Spuren der Kroaten in Österreich” 1996; Medaković 1998).

While such accounts are hardly able to keep the implicit promise of doing justice to the ‘other Vienna’ (otherness in Vienna), the history of the working classes and their organizations do at least deal with migrants in the sense that most members of these classes in Vienna were migrants from mostly Slavic regions of the monarchy. However, workers in these accounts are described as Viennese or Austrian workers, while their migration experiences and experiences of not only being socially and socioculturally other but also in a cultural-ethnic (and in some cases also a religious) sense are largely ignored. Research that attempts at reversing the Viennese “city imago” created at the time of Lueger which “constitutes itself through polarizing and excluding the respective Other – women, madmen, strangers, workers“ is still rare and often very general about the ‘others’ it is dealing with (Maderthaner and Musner 1999).

A population whose experiences with being excluded and persecuted as ‘other’ have been described in numerous accounts are the Viennese Jews. However, in this case it is often being forgotten, that most Jews had migrated to Vienna in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, just like the majority of Christians. Many of them were actually forced migrants, who had left the Russian Empire because of anti-semitic pogroms and bad living conditions. This migration context is often neglected in favor of essentialist images of “the Viennese Jewry”.

Generally there is a relative lack of research and publications on Czechs in Vienna. (G. Fischer 1997; Karoh 1992; Brousek 1980; M. Glettler 1972; Monika Glettler 1970; Winkler 1919) The relation between the publications about these migrants and their enormous number and relevance at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is disproportionate. It is not unprobable that there is a causal connection between this misrepresentation and the fact that the Czech communities and their organizations virtually disappeared during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although the majority of the migrants’ second and third generations had stayed in Vienna. Fears are that migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia might be assimilated in a similar manner (see below, *Prominently Absent*).

More recent migrations, especially labor migrants from Turkey and Yugoslavia, have received considerable attention, however rather with sociologists and also anthropologists and politologists than with historians. An overview of migration to Austria in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is therefore to be found in the Handbook of Austria’s Political System (Bauböck 1997) and not in a history book. There is valuable work on housing conditions, segregation and assimilation, consumption, generational conflict etc. There is less research in political rights and citizenship, but some researchers set foot on this route in papers on political (under-) representation of migrants and on cultural and political organizations (Grasl 2003; Bratić 2003; Bratić 2000; W. Fischer, Herzog-Punzenberger and Waldrauch forthcoming; Sicakkan forthcoming; Bauböck and Rundell 1998).

The paper I am presenting is a contribution to strengthen this relatively new strand of research and to add to it questions of culture in combination with social and political processes. It is also an attempt at introducing migrant viewpoints into the study of history in collaboration with authors from social and political studies. A new exhibition on forty years of labor migration to Vienna, the first one to try to present migrants’ views instead of views on them, gave new momentum to projects of ‘historicization as strategy’(Büro für Ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen 2004).

### **Prominently Absent**

Citizens from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, who make up the absolute majority of Vienna’s non-naturalized migrants, are prominently absent in mainstream but also in specialized discourses and spaces. Given their number of more than 10 percent of Vienna’s inhabitants, their representation is particularly low.

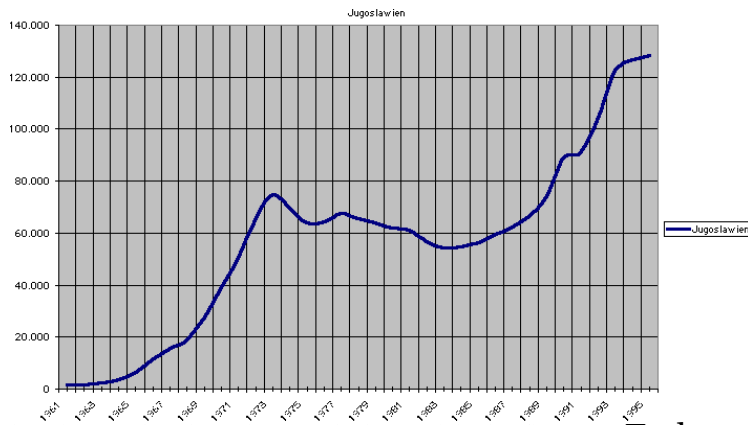


Illustration: (ex-) Yugoslav citizens in Vienna (Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien. 1961–1996).

The illustration shows how the (then still) Yugoslav population

in Vienna developed as a whole.<sup>2</sup> With the first recruiting of Yugoslav workers in 1962, their number began to increase slowly each year. At that time foreign workers were still considered seasonal migrants, i.e. they were being forced to return after a short period of employment in Austria. Hence the name *Gastarbeiter* (guest-laborers). In the late 60ies and early 70ies their number rose rapidly. With the economic crisis around 1973 the Austrian government changed its policy and tried to uninvite the ‘guest-laborers’ permanently. This policy succeeded only partly. The result was, that the average number of Yugoslavs decreased, but at the same time a stable permanent core-population developed. What also contributed to the decrease in ‘foreign’ population was the policy of the socialist government to naturalize migrants. What the graph does not show is the dominance of men between the age of 30 and 50 at the beginning of work migration. The percentage of women and the average age increased during the stabilization period in the 1970ies. In this decade a new migrant segment became important: the Turks and the Kurds.

id Montenegro	69,400
	15,819
erzegovina	19,628
ia	5,727
Turkey	37,004
Poland	13,179
Germany	12,289

Table: Foreign nationals with residence in Vienna in 2001

In the late 80ies the number of Yugoslav migrants began to increase again, due to the economic and political crisis in their country. The wars in Yugoslavia, which started in 1991, forced a huge number of citizens who would normally not have migrated abroad, and also to Vienna. The result was a rapid growth of the Yugoslav diaspora. As a result, the nature of this migrant segment changed radically. Paradoxically, this (more or less passionately) imagined community began to increase and to fall apart at the same time. It became partly dysfunctional, and several new diasporas developed. These have on the one hand often still been connected to each other, but on the other hand the different social composition of the new, mostly forced migrants, added fresh fractions. The contemporary relations between several migrant groups can be illustrated with a couple of figures from the Vienna statistical department (MA 66, see table<sup>3</sup>). This relation has been typical for migration to Vienna in the last 40 years with some fluctuations.

<sup>2</sup> This section of this preliminary version of my paper is taken from my article “Traveling Tunes. Pumping up the Volume of X-Yugoslav Pop Music in Diaspora,” *Ports of call. Central European and North American Culture/s in Motion*, eds. Susan Ingram, Markus Reisenleitner and Cornelia Szabó-Knotik (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2003). It will be revised for publication. I have elaborated the topic more in a presentation with the same title as this chapter at the International Metropolis Conference 2003 in Vienna <<http://www.civmig.balkanissimo.net>>.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that among the citizens of Serbia and Montenegro and of Macedonia is also a not unsubstantial number of Albanians. Hungarians and Roma are also invisible in this statistic. Furthermore, among the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the three entities are not recognizable. Neither can the number of people who still declare themselves Yugoslavs be seen.

Due to their history, migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia are mostly working class with rural backgrounds. In contrast to other groups and communities, there is little elite formation, although there are many intellectuals from former Yugoslav countries. These however most often distance themselves from the majority of migrants, either because they are of the 'wrong' ethnicity or because they are suspicious to them in an ideological or cultural way. Intellectuals tend to imagine the *gastarbajteri* (Yugoslav labor migrants) as rural authoritarian personalities with chauvinist inclinations. This fragmented diaspora does however have working class elites, which run organizations that limit their activities to sports, leisure and culture. These clubs and societies are very strong and numerous. There are national football leagues and national overarching organizations. Unlike Turks and Kurds, Ex-Yugoslavs are however seldom to be found in organizations, which deal with migrant and migration policy, such as the Vienna Integration Fund. Even rarer are they in Austrian political parties let alone in representative bodies – although those resident for more than five years will have the right to vote in the next district elections (Grasl 2003). Correspondingly poor are the attempts of politicians to address migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Only in spaces of culture and art are there developments which might open up ways of ex-Yugoslav migrant voices into mainstream discourses. These are the spaces where a history of migrants in the city might take roots and from where it could percolate into other areas.

### **The 'Kolaric'-Effect**

Besides these factors, which are much on the part of the migrants 'themselves', we also have to deal with a discursive history, a tradition of speaking and thinking about migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia. This is the history of a paternalistic attitude, which has transformed into xenophobia in more recent years. Although discourses are to be conceptualized as contested and fluid, there still is a remarkable shift in the late 1970ies, which separates two phases.

In the 1960ies and 70ies, both trade unions and industry organizations were interested in creating a pacifying, paternalistic image of faithful Yugoslav helots who come from poorer countries in order to fill the workforce gaps in Austria and to return home after they are not needed any more. In the 1970ies, especially with the global economic crisis in 1973, the unions grew ever more sceptical of labor migration and, as mentioned earlier, the policy of the ruling Socialist Party was to make migrants return. As this policy failed and the first Yugoslavs and Turks appeared in the employment centers followed by a second generation of migrants who 'surfaced' in schools, these topics were increasingly discussed in combination with alleged 'fears' of the Austrians about *Ausländer*s already in the 1970ies. One strategy to deal with these fears was the Kolaric campaign of 1973: an advertising industry sponsored poster showing a stereotypical Yugoslav 'beast of burden' and a little Austrian boy asking him why he is called *Tschusch* (pejorative for migrants from the South and East) although they share the family name Kolaric (alluding to the Czech and labor migrant origins of the majority of Viennese).

This campaign set the tone for discourses on labor migrants in Austria, which was a mixture of paternalism and self-reflective elements. 'Kolaric' became a synonym for Yugoslav labor migrants. This image corresponded much with the interests of the industry in cheap labor and at the same time with trade unions' policy who wanted to hold the influx of foreign work-force at bay while simultaneously protecting and controlling the *gastarbajteri*, as they were classical trade union clientele. This discursive strand came under pressure with the next global crisis in the 1980ies when parts of the Austrian conservatives dis-

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*Illustration 1: My name's Kolaric, your name's Kolaric, so why do they call you 'Tschusch'?*

missed the industry's policy of importing labor force in favor of protectionist and xenophobic measures and discourses, much under pressure from the ever more right leaning Freedom Party under new leader Jörg Haider, and in coalition with strong forces among the Social Democracy. The outcome so far is the end of the Kolaric consensus and the advent of a confrontation of discourses of political anti-racism and mainstream xenophobia among most social strata and political camps, with a humanitarian discourse mediating between both.

### **Research Goals and Interviews**

In this complicated and partly hostile situation, it is the goal of my research to negotiate migrant narratives to public spaces, such as academic discourses, education, media, exhibitions etc. Work already done, such as the recent migration exhibition *gastarbajteri*, will be complemented with new material in order to make migrant memories part of mainstream history and general memory. For creating this material I am currently conducting semi-biographical interviews in order to create a comprehensive research strategy. The interviews and their analysis will provide a basis for deciding which further research strategies are most viable.

There are two main interests in this research: one is to describe individual experiences of migrants, the other is (re-) constructing collective experiences. As the history of migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia is characterized by several conflicts exactly about what such a collectivity could be (like *ethnic* as in Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian etc. or *social* as in Workers, Urbanites, Old and New Migrants etc.) and as collectivisms are generally contested by concurring attachments such as gender, generation, sexual orientation, life style etc., I am making as little presuppositions about belongings the interviewees might have as possible. This means that one overarching research strategy is to allow for diverse if multiple and fluid belongings both during interviewing and in analyzing the material as well as to pay respect to individual viewpoints and ways of life while at the same time tracing collective imaginations, common periodizations and converging experiences.

In order not to generalize from attitudes of specific socio-cultural groups, I am trying to reflect the socio-cultural composition of the migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia by including more working class interviewees than middle class (starting from education levels and assessing it during the interviews), with a focus on migrants from Banat, Vojvodina, western Hercegovina and Slavonia, including a majority of Serbs, but also Croats, Hungarians and 'mixed' families, as well as Albanians, Bosnian Muslims and Roma, including both bilingual and polylingual persons. I am interviewing both un-organized and organized migrants, including leaders of migrant organizations. Half of the respondents should be men. I am interviewing two members of two generations of each same family in separate sessions. Therefore I am working with respondents between 25 and forty and between fifty and sixty years, the so-called first and second generations of labor migrants. At this stage I am saving interviews with arrivals from the late 1980ies and those who came during the wars of the 90ies for future research. Cultural inclinations which might influence the standpoints of a respondent are being assessed during the interviews using attitudes towards exemplary cultural areas and products as indicators. Being a relative new-comer to oral history, I am applying much of my experiences in historical discourse analysis to my material and contrasting, supplementing and paralleling it with other sources. In spite of all efforts to catch the diversity of experiences and backgrounds among migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the study does not claim to be representative, but rather an exploratory investigation, which goes as closely to the experience of respondents as possible. This, of course, makes it hard to generalize, but instead of generalizations I am hoping to grasp how broad the multitude of migrant experiences in this historical situations might be.

The topics of the interviews are the migration experience beginning with arrival, motives and decision process, work-life, family and education in Vienna, contacts with other migrants, links to the domestic country, holiday practices, questions of return and contacts with non-migrants. One section of the conversation circles around questions of identities and belonging, focussing specifically on perceptions of (urban) space and places, and on strategies of placing oneself in an urban environment. Another thematic area is about cultural preferences by the example of musical prac-

tices (listening, performing, dancing) and cooking and eating, as these practices are not exclusive to certain migrant segments and both practices are mobile and loaded with cultural meanings.

In order to get to grips with individual and collective aspects of migrant experiences, I devote much time during the interviews to so-called community practices like passage rituals, cultural and sports events, political organizations — be it that the respondent takes part in them or just talks about them (or maybe rejects them). The second approach to collectivity concerns parallels in biographies. I am looking for turning points which exist in all biographies, both simultaneous ones, such as political changes, new immigration legislation, war events, but also ‘scaling’ turning points, such as the conclusion of the establishing phase after arrival, the granting of the unlimited visa etc. In search for collective narratives and judgements I am also asking about the respondents’ conceptualizations of their own histories and of migrant history, about ‘what counts in life’, as well as about images of self and other. In this study I want to contrast diverging evaluations about comparable phenomena in the collective narrations, and bring these together with diverse life experiences in order to present the breadth of experiences of one specific migrant segment in Vienna.

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