



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

# “Homecomings” and Internal Migrations

in the History and Present of  
Central and Southeastern Europe

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Conference | University of Primorska, University Library, Koper | 11–12 June 2026

ORGANISED BY

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ZRC SAZU



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## **“Homecomings” and Internal Migrations in the History and Present of Central and Southeastern Europe**

Conference at the University of Primorska,  
University Library, Koper

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EDITED BY Miha Zobec, Ulf Brunnbauer  
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## About the Conference

The regions of Central and Southeastern Europe have traditionally been regarded as areas of outmigration. This is hardly surprising, given the magnitude and continuity of population outflows since the late nineteenth century, which continue to shape many places in the region today. As a result, long-distance emigration – much like the forcible population transfers following the world wars – profoundly influenced nation-building processes across the region and steered migration scholarship toward the movements of ethnic kin abroad.

Yet migration has often been circular, non-linear, and multidirectional. Migrants not only travelled abroad to improve their circumstances at home; many also sought opportunities within their own states. Their absence and return, the connections they maintained, and the remittances they sent have all left a lasting imprint on the societies of origin. This conference explores how this plurality of movements influenced sending societies, highlighting valuable yet still insufficiently examined aspects of mobility in the region's history and present.

“Returnees” have frequently brought with them new ideas, skills, knowledge, and distinct demeanour and attire, eliciting surprise or even resentment – but also emulation – among fellow villagers. Many invested in houses, repaid debts, bought new land, and sometimes established small businesses even before their “homecoming”. Were such investments merely consumerist gestures that perpetuated the dependency of local economies, or did they foster economic development? How did contemporary observers evaluate the effects of return and of remittances, and how did governments and other authorities try to steer the return flows of money, ideas, and people? Often, “homecomings” were temporary, involving short-term stays, study exchanges, or organised visits in the context of burgeoning ‘roots’ tourism.

While migration studies in and about the region paid most attention to international migration, internal migrations were equally salient for social and economic development since the nineteenth century. They changed settlement patterns, offered new opportunities of social mobility, but could also lead migrants into exploitative labour. A particular tension arises from the repeated redrawing of borders in the region, which undercut established domestic mobility systems and turned mobile workers into international migrants. The connections between domestic mobility and international migration are hardly studied, even though the migration trajectory of many workers in the region suggest a link.

While focusing on Central and Southeastern Europe, the conference adopts a transregional and comparative lens, tracing influences and connections across Europe, the Atlantic, and beyond. It also seeks to foster dialogue among scholars from various disciplines across the humanities and social sciences.

The conference is hosted by the University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities in Koper, and co-

organised by the Faculty of Humanities, the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Slovenian Migration Institute, the Science and Research Centre Koper, and the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies. It is co-funded by projects of the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS): “Between the ‘Tenth Banovina’ and the ‘Seventh Republic’: The States and Diasporas in the First and Second Yugoslavias” (J6-50191), “Migration and Development in Central and Southeastern Europe since the Nineteenth Century” (BI-DE/25-27-004), and the programme “National and Cultural Identity of the Slovene Emigration in the Context of Migration Studies” (P5-0070).

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# Programme

## Thursday, 11 June

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9 – 9.30 registration of participants

9.30 – 10 Welcome speeches (dean Aleksander Panjek, director of the University Library Jonatan Vinkler, director IOS Ulf Brunnbauer, Miha Zobec, UP FHŠ, ISIM ZRC SAZU, PI of the project “Between the “Tenth Banovina” and the “Seventh Republic”)

### 1 Postwar returns

10 – 11.30

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**Balázs Ablonczy** RETURNNEES, EXPELLEES OR HOMECOMERS? Female voices and refugeedom in the postWWI Hungary

**Serhiy Choliy** Heimkehrer. Returnees from the Russian captivity during the final months of the Habsburg Empire (1918)

**Miha Zobec** Return to “Slovenia” and “Yugoslavia” before and after the First World War

**Aleksej Kalc** Return to Yugoslavia after World War II and the Reception of Returnees, 1945–1951

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Neja Blaj Hribar, INZ

11.30 – 12 Coffee break

### 2 Transnational politics of movement and identification

12 – 13.30

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**Zekiye Gürün-Üçem** Beyond Return: The “German Dream” and the Moral Geographies of Asylum Mobility between Türkiye and Germany

**Nadia Molek** Circular Mobilities, Symbolic Returns and Ethnic Re-Emergence: Slovene–Argentine Transnationalism in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries

**Fatlum Jashari** Home After War and After Europe: Contrasting Post-1999 Returns with 2010s Circular and Forced Returns to Kosovo

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Mladen Zobec, Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz

13.30 – 15 Lunch

## 3

### From migrants to tourists and students

15 - 16.30

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**Sara Bernard & Nikolaos Papadogiannis** Return migration, tourism and gender relations in Yugoslavia and Greece, 1970s-1980s

**Petra Kavrečič Božeglav & Miha Koderman** Visiting the Old Homeland: Slovene Emigrants in the First and Second Yugoslavia from a Comparative Perspective

**Gašper Mithans** International Scholarship Students in Socialist Slovenia: Slovenian Descent, Migration, and Belonging

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Stefan Segberger, IOS

16.30 - 17 *Coffee break*

## 4

### The impact of financial, social and cultural remittances

17 - 18.30

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**Balázs Pálvölgyi** Plans and Practices for the Utilisation of American Emigrants' Savings in Hungary, 1867-1914

**Marija Brujić** Transcultural Capital Among (Return) Migrant Entrepreneurs in Serbia

**Jan Bernot** Migrations and Language Use in the Multilingual Roman Catholic Parishes of the Diocese of Ljubljana during the Long Nineteenth Century

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Borut Žerjal, UP FHŠ

*Dinner: El Toro Steakhouse - 19h*

## Friday, 12 June

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### 5

#### Yugoslavia's search for hard currency

10 – 11.30

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**Emilija Cvetković** Trusted Enough? Yugoslav Diaspora and US Foreign Investment in Socialist Yugoslavia

**Sara Žerić Đulović** Where Do Our Devize Go? Gastarbeiter Letters, Remittances, and Imagined Homecomings

**Lev Centrih** Between the Socialist State and the Self-Managed Market: Managing the Return of Slovenian Emigrants during the Economic Crises of the 1970s and 1980s

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Ulf Brunnbauer, IOS

11.30 – 12 *Coffee break*

### 6

#### Temporary Work Amid Shifting Political Spaces

12 – 13.30

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**Neja Blaj Hribar** Migrant Workers and Day Labourers from Other Yugoslav Banovinas in Ljubljana in the 1930s

**Veronika Kupková** The Pressnitzer „travelling folks“: (Un)easy returns home. A case study of the itinerant musicians from Bohemia

**Mladen Zobec** Return migration, postsocialism, and the stalled expansion of the Polog Albanians' Migrant Economy

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Miha Koderman, UP FHŠ

13.30 – 15 *Lunch*

### 7

#### Internal Migration Patterns from Imperial Rule to State Socialism

15 – 16.30

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**Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić** Encountering the Plain: Problems in the Settlement and Adaptation of Colonists to Life in Vojvodina in the First Years After the Second World War

**Nataša Simeunović Bajić** Tripartite Transmediality of the "Eighth Offensive":

**Fatos Hoxha** Labour Migration and Social Change in the Trepča mining complex in Kosovo during 1960-1980

MODERATOR/CHAIR: Lev Centrih, UP FHŠ

16.30 – 17 *Coffee break*

#### Roundtable Discussion

17 – 18

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Ulf Brunnbauer, Aleksej Kalc, Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik, Marina Lukšič Hacin, Miha Zobec

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# Abstracts

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## PANEL 1

### Postwar Returns

#### Balázs Ablonczy

##### **Returnees, expelees, or homecomers? Female voices and refuegedom in the post-WWI Hungary**

A few weeks before the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty with Hungary on June 4, 1920, the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Religious Cults issued its circular No. 41998, in which it called on burgher school teachers who had fled the lost territories of Hungary to write about their flight, the events of the revolutions of 1918-1919 in their home areas. More than 250 teachers sent in their memories, almost half (88) of them women. The value of this group of records lies in the fact that, on the one hand, the type of school had a much deeper impact on Hungarian society than secondary schools. In my analysis, I recall the memories of some forty female teachers who fled from Czechoslovakia and they were telling their stories. In this presentation, I will therefore seek to answer three questions:

1. what vocabulary do the refugee teachers use to talk about the revolutions and their own experience of flight? Do they speak out of the official discourse?
2. how does this differ from the way men talk/write?
3. what does it say about the public mood in the Hungary of Horthy, about the foundations of the revisionist sentiment and about the refugee existence itself? Can we describe it as a postcolonial experiment?

Through these answers, I am pretty confident that fundamental questions about the Modern Hungarian (and perhaps, Central European) history can be clarified and presented to an academic audience.

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**Balázs Ablonczy** (b. 1974, PhD in 2004 at ELTE; DSc at Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2025) is associate professor at the University Eötvös Loránd, Department of Cultural History and scientific advisor at the ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History. His research area covers the Hungarian history in the first half of the 20th century. His recent books: *Az utolsó nyár - Magyarország 1944* [The Last Summer - Hungary, 1944, published in 2024] *Go East! - A History of Hungarian Turanism* (Indiana UP, 2022)

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## Serhiy Choliy

### **Heimkehrer. Returnees from the Russian captivity during the final months of the Habsburg Empire (1918)**

This paper examines the process of repatriation from military captivity following the separate peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest concluded in 1918. As military operations on the Eastern Front of the First World War effectively ceased in that year, these treaties created the prospect of a favorable resolution of the conflict for the Central Powers. In addition to securing access to crucial economic resources necessary for the continuation of the war, the agreements facilitated the mass return of former soldiers of the Central Powers who had been held in Russian captivity since the summer of 1914.

The paper focuses on two interconnected aspects of the return of prisoners of war to Austria-Hungary that have remained largely overlooked in contemporary historiography. First, it addresses the state's determination to mobilize the returning former prisoners as a renewed manpower resource for the ongoing war effort. The Austro-Hungarian authorities sought to reintegrate these men into active military units, a policy that resulted in the development of specific internal strategies of personnel management and military administration.

Second, the paper analyzes the reactions of the returnees themselves, shaped by prolonged captivity, extended separation from their homes, and the clearly observable deterioration of living conditions within the Monarchy. These individual and collective experiences often conflicted with the state's expectations and objectives. Consequently, the attempt to extract additional military resources from the returning prisoners increasingly clashed with the social realities and psychological conditions of those repatriated from captivity. While this policy produced shortterm advantages for the Central Powers, it ultimately contributed to the acceleration of internal disintegration within both Germany and Austria-Hungary and, in the longer term, facilitated the collapse of the Central Powers as a political and military bloc.

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**Serhiy Choliy** is the Associate Professor for history at the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Ukraine. After his graduation with Master degree from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv in 2008, he completed his doctoral project by joint study in Kyiv, Vienna, and Warsaw. During the last decade, he investigates the processes of military manning in Europe with an emphasis on Austria-Hungary. His second research interest is the interrelation of the processes of technological development and population management. His recent publication:

Serhiy Choliy, *The Mobilization at the Periphery. Universal Conscription as A Modernizing Factor of the Habsburg Empire from 1868–1914*. Vienna: V&R unipress, Vienna University Press, 2025

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## Miha Zobec

### Return to “Slovenia” and “Yugoslavia” before and after the First World War

The contribution addresses return migration primarily from the United States to “Slovene” territories, particularly Carniola, from the turn of the twentieth century to the post-First World War period. Rather than treating return as an aberration, it understands it as part of individual and family strategies and as a continuation of the “cyclical” migrations long present in the region. However, the First World War and the transformation of the international migration regime brought these movements to a standstill. While the immediate post-war period witnessed significant remigration, broader post-war transformations encouraged more permanent relocations across the ocean, giving rise to American diasporas known as “American Slovenia.”

Drawing on ecclesiastical sources, such as diocesan visitations and parish chronicles, as well as ego-documents and institutional records from the Habsburg Empire and the first Yugoslavia, the contribution combines macro- and micro-level approaches to illuminate both the institutional frameworks regulating return migration and the lived experiences of returnees at the local level. By emphasising that permanent relocation across the ocean, and the formation of diasporas, also resulted from disenchantment with conditions shaped by state and ecclesiastical authorities, it situates the case firmly within a transnational social space. Framing these local dynamics within a broader Central and Southeast European context, it presents the “Slovenian experience” as comparable to developments elsewhere, including Poland and Czechoslovakia.

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**Miha Zobec** is a Research Associate at the Slovenian Migration Institute, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and an Assistant Professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Primorska. His research interests focus on the relationship between nation-building processes and migrations and on the history of the family in migration contexts. His most recent publications include 'Italian, Argentine, Yugoslav and Slovene: the many identities of Rudi Guštin'. *EuropeAsia studies*. 2026, and 'The kin-state and sending-state policies of interwar Yugoslavia: the issue of Julian March immigrants in their Yugoslav 'homeland' and the return of the 'Tenth Banovina'. *Central and Eastern European migration review*. 2025, vol. 14, no. 2, 17-35.

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## Aleksej Kalc

### **Return to Yugoslavia after World War II and the Reception of Returnees, 1945–1951**

This paper examines the repatriation of Yugoslav emigrants organized in the aftermath of the Second World War by the authorities of socialist Yugoslavia, in cooperation with Yugoslav emigrant organizations worldwide. Conducted under the slogan of mobilizing the workforce for reconstruction of the homeland, the initiative was implemented within the framework of the First Five-Year Economic Plan and resulted in the return of approximately 16,000 individuals from various parts of the world. The article outlines the political context and logistical dimensions of this ambitious undertaking, which required substantial organizational and financial resources and was further propelled by widespread enthusiasm among the Yugoslav public and emigrant communities. Particular attention, however, is devoted to the many controversial aspects of the repatriation process, especially the challenges associated with the reception, integration, and adaptation of returnees to the social, economic, and political realities of socialist Yugoslavia. Special emphasis is placed on Slovenia as the principal reception area for continental returnees and, together with Croatia, as a central region for their employment and social integration.

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**Aleksej Kalc** graduated in history from the University of Trieste (Italy) and received his PhD in historical anthropology at the humanities doctoral school Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis in Ljubljana. Before joining the Slovenian Migration Institute, he worked as a researcher at the Section for History of the Slovenian National Library in Trieste and then at the Science and Research Centre of the University of Primorska in Koper. He is also a professor at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Primorska. His research fields are social, cultural and political history with main emphases on migration and population studies, urban history, border regions, social relationships, demographic and migration politics. His recent publications include the monograph (co-written with Mirjam Milharčič-Hladnik and Janja Žitnik Serafin) *Daring dreams of the future: Slovenian mass migrations 1870-1945*. Berlin [etc.]: P. Lang, 2024.

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## Zekiye Gürün-Üçem

### **Beyond Return: The “German Dream” and the Moral Geographies of Asylum Mobility between Türkiye and Germany**

This paper, based on the researcher’s PhD project “*Unraveling the ‘German Dream’: An Analysis of the Increasing Trend of Turkish Asylum Seekers in Germany and the Role of Evolving Legal Frameworks*,” examines how contemporary asylum mobility from Türkiye to Germany reconfigures ideas of homecoming and belonging within transregional migration systems linking Southeastern Europe and its extended neighborhood. The study explores how migrants’ aspirations and experiences reshape social imaginaries of justice, security, and opportunity across borders.

Drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines statistical analysis of BAMF asylum data with qualitative interviews conducted in Adana (Türkiye) and Gießen (Germany), the research investigates how asylum seekers navigate between displacement, aspiration, and imagined return. It argues that the “*German Dream*” functions as a moral geography that redefines the meaning of migration and homecoming—not as a physical return, but as a pursuit of dignity and recognition absent in the homeland.

By situating Türkiye–Germany mobility in dialogue with broader patterns of migration in Central and Southeastern Europe, the paper contributes to debates about return, remittances, and social transformation. It highlights how the emotional and structural dimensions of asylum mobility challenge conventional binaries of emigration and return, while revealing how transnational imaginaries and demographic shifts continue to shape both sending and receiving societies.

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Zekiye Gürün-Üçem is a PhD Fellow and Member at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), Justus Liebig University Giessen, a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung PhD Scholar, and a Research Assistant at Leuphana University Lüneburg. Her doctoral research investigates the trajectories of Turkish asylum seekers in Germany and the sociopolitical imaginary of the “German Dream.” Combining qualitative interviews with quantitative data analysis, her work engages with themes of migration, structural violence, and epistemic justice. She is currently a Visiting Researcher at Çukurova University in Adana, Türkiye (until January 2026) as a recipient of the EUPEACE Doctoral Mobility Grant.

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## Nadia Molek

### **Circular Mobilities, Symbolic Returns and Ethnic Re-Emergence: Slovene–Argentine Transnationalism in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries**

This paper examines the contemporary dynamics of Slovene–Argentine transnationalism, focusing on how circular mobilities, symbolic returns, and recent processes of ethnic re-emergence shape both sending and receiving societies.

Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic research and a historical reconstruction of Slovene migration to Argentina, the study argues that the most significant transformations in identity, return practices, and diasporic engagement have occurred not in the classical migration period, but since the late twentieth century, amid political transitions in Slovenia, recurrent crises in Argentina, and the expansion of digital communication. Slovene–Argentine connections have been marked by temporary homecomings, short-term mobility, study exchanges, roots tourism, and digital interaction, all of which constitute forms of “symbolic return” that produce meaningful social effects. These practices have facilitated the circulation of remittances of knowledge, skills, narratives, and memory, contributing to renewed forms of ethnic identification among descendants and reshaping local understandings of Slovene nationhood.

The paper situates these phenomena in a multi-scalar anthropological analytical framework, examining how individuals, families, associations, local communities, and state institutions actively negotiate the value of return—economic, cultural, political, and affective. In doing so, it highlights the emergence of new transnational subjects who reconfigure ethnic boundaries, revive ancestral ties, and participate selectively in Slovene public and symbolic life.

By foregrounding recent and ongoing processes of revival and return, this contribution expands the study of return migration beyond its classical economic focus, illustrating how symbolic mobilities and remittances increasingly shape post-socialist national imaginaries and diasporic futures.

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**Nadia Molek** is a socio-cultural anthropologist and postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Organisational Studies in Novo mesto, Slovenia, and Assistant Professor at the University of Ljubljana. Her research focuses on labour migration, transnationalism, organisational cultures, digitisation, and transformations of work in contemporary societies. She is currently leading a research project on the integration of Asian migrant workers into the Slovenian labour market, with a particular focus on Filipino and Thai workers. Her work combines anthropological and interdisciplinary approaches, drawing on qualitative and ethnographic methodologies to examine labour precarity, migration governance, identity processes, and social inequalities in the context of global transformations.

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## Fatlum Jashari

### Home After War and After Europe: Contrasting Post-1999 Returns with 2010s Circular and Forced Returns to Kosovo

This paper examines two distinct yet interrelated waves of return migration to Kosovo: the large-scale voluntary returns that followed the 1999 conflict, and the more recent circular or forced returns from European Union states during the 2010s. While both groups are framed as “returnees,” their motivations, trajectories, and reintegration experiences differ markedly, revealing the shifting political, economic, and social landscapes of postwar Kosovo. Drawing on interviews with return migrant families, local municipal reports, and NGO documentation, the paper explores how the conditions of departure and the contexts of return shape the meaning of “homecoming.”

Post-1999 returnees often envisioned return as a rebuilding project, motivated by homeland attachment and the promise of political change; yet their reintegration was marked by housing destruction, insecurity, and contested property rights. In contrast, the 2010s witnessed significant numbers of Kosovars returning through deportations or unsuccessful asylum attempts in Germany, Switzerland, and other EU states. These returnees confronted new challenges: stigma associated with “failure,” disrupted schooling for children, and limited economic opportunities in a country with persistent unemployment.

By comparing these two cohorts, the paper argues that return migration in Kosovo is not a singular process but a spectrum shaped by state policies, global mobility regimes, and local community perceptions. The study contributes to broader debates on return, belonging, and the politics of mobility in Central and Southeastern Europe, demonstrating that “coming home” can generate both continuity and displacement across generations.

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**Fatlum Jashari** is a sociologist from Kosovo and holds a Master’s degree in Sociology from the University of Pristina. He has worked as a researcher at the Institute for Social Studies in Kosovo, focusing on migration, social change, and post-conflict societies. He has presented his work at more than 30 conferences across Europe, Asia, and the United States, and has completed several international residency programs. Notably, he was a resident in the Goethe-Institut project “Perspective. One Europe, Many Stories,” during which he lived and conducted research in Warsaw for three months.

His academic work includes the publication of ten peer-reviewed articles indexed in Google Scholar and Web of Science. He also serves as a reviewer for several national and international journals, including the *Social Studies Journal*. His research combines empirical fieldwork with sociological theory, with a particular focus on migration, return, and identity in the context of Kosovo and the wider Southeastern European region.

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PANEL 3

**From Migrants to Tourists and Students**

**Sara Bernard & Nikolaos Papadogiannis**

**Return migration, tourism and gender relations in Yugoslavia and Greece, 1970s-1980s**

In the 1970s-1980s, Yugoslavia and Greece experienced a surge in the remigration of workers employed in Northwestern Europe, alongside a boom in international tourism, especially from the recruiting countries where Greek and Yugoslav workers had been concentrated. The paper asks whether and how assumptions about gender relations among migrants from provincial areas were reproduced or challenged by the advent of mass tourism in their countries of origin, and remigration. We examine tourism simultaneously as a sector of employment for returnees, serving the leisure of Western Europeans, and as a socio-cultural arena enabling intimate encounters across purported provincial/urban and Central/Southern European divides. The talk takes a comparative perspective and examines whether the differing political/economic conditions in Yugoslavia and Greece affected the impact of tourism and return migration on gender relations in those countries. The aim of the paper is twofold: first, to diversify the study of migration in relation to gender. Relevant research has recently emerged (e.g, Mattes 2005, Freeland 2022), but has largely not addressed the link between remigration and gender in the migrants' countries of origin. Second, historical/anthropological/sociological research on gender in Greece and Yugoslavia has focused on their urban centres and touristic provincial regions, ignoring changes in non-touristic provincial areas. Instead, the paper shows that the joint examination of remigration and tourism reveals interconnected shifts in gender relations between West Germany, Yugoslavia, and Greece, as well as between urban and diverse provincial areas in Yugoslavia and Greece. Our analysis draws on sociological surveys, oral testimonies, and the press.

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**Sara Bernard** is a Lecturer in Societal Transformations at the University of Glasgow. Her main research interest lies in the history of migration after 1945 with focus on labour migration, the Cold-War period and the former Yugoslav region. Among her most recent publications, she is co-author and co-editor of *The Cold War of Labor Migrants: Opportunities, Struggles and Adaptations across the Iron Curtain and Beyond* (2025 Routledge), and author of 'Global imaginaries of work and workplaces: employment abroad in the conceptualisations of Yugoslav identity' (2026, *Europe-Asia Studies*). Sara is initiator and co-coordinator of the Working Group Labour Migration History of the European Labour History Network.

**Nikolaos Papadogiannis** is a Senior Lecturer in European History at the University of Stirling, and a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow. His research pertains to the histories of protest, sexuality, migration, and health in West Germany and Southern Europe in the 1960s-1990s. His monograph, entitled *Militant around the Clock? Left-wing Youth Politics, Leisure and Sexuality in post-dictatorship Greece, 1974-1981*, was published in 2015 by Berghahn Books. He has also published extensively in journals, such as *Contemporary European History*, the *Journal of Contemporary History*, *Social History*, *European History Quarterly*, and the *European Review of History*. He is one of the editors of *Contemporary European History*.

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## Petra Kavrečič Božeglav & Miha Koderman

### Visiting the Old Homeland: Slovene Emigrants in the First and Second Yugoslavia from a Comparative Perspective

The phenomenon of emigration profoundly shaped European society in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century, a period marked by mass migration to more industrially developed European countries and to North America. After attaining a certain level of material well-being in their new environments, emigrants often developed a desire to return, at least temporarily, to their country of origin. Such visits by emigrants and their descendants may therefore be understood as a specific manifestation of tourism, particularly given that the return to the homeland is as old as the process of emigration itself.

Over the course of the twentieth century (especially in its second half), the practice of “temporary return” to the country of origin, gradually evolved into a distinct form of tourist mobility. Despite this transformation, these visits continued to be driven primarily by familial ties and a sense of national belonging. Together, these factors constituted a powerful emotional dimension which, reinforced by spatial and temporal distance, often intensified among emigrant communities and was sustained across multiple generations as a key motivation for visiting the former homeland.

This presentation adopts a comparative perspective on emigrant visits to the “old” homeland, focusing on the contexts of the first and second Yugoslavia, that is, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and socialist Yugoslavia. It examines the principal characteristics of such visits, as well as their organization and supervision, in both periods.

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**Petra Kavrečič Božeglav**, associate professor, Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska. Her research focuses on the economic and social history of tourism. Her scientific work addresses the development of modern tourism in present-day western Slovenia, the relationship between tourism and political ideology, and the evolution of social tourism in Yugoslavia. She is also engaged in exploring relations between communities in multiethnic border regions and women's history.

**Miha Koderman**, associate professor and senior research fellow, Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska. His main research fields include tourism and economic geography, as well as geography of migration. He is the author (or coauthor) of one scientific monograph and over 50 scientific articles, conference contributions, component parts, or chapters in monographs. He has coedited 5 scientific monographs and is also an active member of the editorial board of the *Geografski obzornik* (Geographic Horizon) professional journal. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, in the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Science (2017–2018), and at the Department of Geosciences of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, U.S.A. (2020).

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## Gašper Mithans

### **International Scholarship Students in Socialist Slovenia: Slovenian Descent, Migration, and Belonging**

The paper investigates the mobility, categorisation, and lived experience of visiting students who arrived in Socialist Slovenia between the late 1960s and the 1980s, with particular attention to those of Slovenian descent. Drawing on archival holdings of the Slovenian Cultural Foundation *Slovenska matica*, the Institute for International Scientific, Technical, Educational and Cultural Cooperation (ZAMTES), and the Slovenian State Security Service, it analyses how the state distinguished between students perceived as “returning kin” and those framed as participants in non-aligned educational solidarity – as well as the situations in which these categories overlapped.

While most foreign students originated from African and Arab countries and entered Yugoslavia through non-aligned cooperation, the country simultaneously maintained a special commitment to emigrant communities and their descendants. Students were placed within a partly different cultural, political, and administrative regime and were sometimes offered not only university studies but also vocational training. Although officially emphasised as culturally proximate and entitled to a special form of belonging, many did not speak Slovenian or spoke it only poorly and therefore attended language courses alongside other foreign students. This case study shows how this dual logic shaped scholarships, administrative support, and oversight.

By contrast, students without Slovenian ancestry were governed through a combination of hospitality, developmental ambition, and preventive surveillance. The paper explores the premise of educational migration to Slovenia, aiming to trace unequal practices of belonging and to examine how socialist internationalism was negotiated against ethnonational obligations within bureaucratic routines, while also addressing the question of reciprocity.

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**Gašper Mithans** is a Senior Research Associate at the Science and Research Centre Koper. He completed his undergraduate studies in Cultural Studies and Anthropology at the University of Primorska in 2007 and earned his PhD in History from the same university in 2012. His research interests encompass transnational history, history of religions, historical anthropology, and border and migration studies. He is the author of one monograph and numerous articles and book chapters, and the co-editor of several volumes and special issues of academic journals. He has led three national and international research projects and has held visiting positions abroad, including a Fulbright Visiting Scholarship at the University of California, Berkeley in 2020 and a Research Fellowship at the University College Cork in 2018.

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## The Impact of Financial, Social and Cultural Remittances

### Balázs Pálvölgyi

#### Plans and Practices for the Utilisation of American Emigrants' Savings in Hungary, 1867–1914

One of the focal points of the debates on mass emigration from Hungary was the issue of remittances. Even contemporaries considered the disproportionate land ownership conditions, which prevented the improvement of living standards for broader social strata, to be one of the most serious social problems of the era. In connection with expanding opportunities for land acquisition, the debates also touched on ways of channelling and using the savings of emigrants.

Due to the financial services environment of the era, a recurring theme in the Hungarian-language American press of the time was the series of irregularities related to emigrants sending money home. While the first emigration law of 1903 clearly stated the need to ensure the safe transfer of money by emigrants, and comprehensive plans were made in Hungary for the effective use of the inflow of money. In addition to land parcelling, settlements, new credit schemes, and development programs, the launch of programs to promote the investment of money sent home by returnees or emigrants was also on the agenda.

However, only part of the government's plans was realized before the outbreak of World War I. It is true that progress was made in terms of secure money transfer options, but when it came to access to land, returnees were largely dependent on their own resources, as the limited state programs did not provide an adequate environment for the effective use of "American money."

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Balázs Pálvölgyi is a legal historian and academic based in Hungary, whose work includes a focus on migration history. He earned degrees in law and history at Eötvös Loránd University, where he also completed PhD studies in law. He received his PhD in 2007 and habilitation in 2025. Since 2000, he has taught at the University of Győr, where he became head of the Department of Legal History in 2026. His scholarship connects legal history with broader historical research, including migration history, and he is active in several Hungarian and international scholarly societies devoted to legal history, comparative legal history, and parliamentary history.

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## **Marija Brujić**

### **Transcultural Capital Among (Return) Migrant Entrepreneurs in Serbia**

Whereas the developmental potential of migrants' human, cultural, social and economic capital has long been noted, the impact of other forms of migrant capital has often been overlooked. To address such inattention, this paper redirects focus to the importance of (return) migrants' affective, local, symbolic and citizenship capital in establishing their own enterprises. The data were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted in 2024 with 16 Serbian entrepreneurs who had either returned or moved to Serbia from abroad. Concurring with other migration studies, the results illustrate that entrepreneurs possessing migration experience are able to apply their migrant capital within their home countries distinctly due to their preparedness for their return. More conclusively, the findings demonstrate that the possession of transcultural capital was essential for the interlocutors to act as lifestyle or privileged migrants, be prosperous entrepreneurs, and, consequently, function as developing agents in their own local communities. As lifestyle migrants are neither a homogenous nor a fixed group, one's (ancestral) country of origin may easily serve as a lifestyle destination. Thus, this study argues that transcultural capital allows (return) migrants to act as lifestyle migrants. Furthermore, despite contemporary political and economic uncertainty, they were capable of adapting to Serbia's socio-cultural context. The entrepreneurs' subjective perception of a good life was more important than their economic motivation. Nevertheless, the results also caution that some migrant entrepreneurs are ready to exit Serbia should their lifestyles be threatened at the macro (e.g. state crisis), meso (e.g. corruption) or micro (e.g. family movement, sickness) levels.

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**Marija Brujić** is a senior research associate at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, where she teaches Anthropology of Migration (MA and PhD levels). Marija Brujić finished her MSc studies in visual anthropology (University of Oxford) and received her PhD in ethnology and anthropology (University of Belgrade). In addition to this, she was also a visiting scholar at the University of Graz and at the University of Amsterdam. She also conducted ethnographic fieldwork among the Serbian diaspora in Austria, Slovenia, and the Netherlands.

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## Jan Bernot

### **Migrations and Language Use in the Multilingual Roman Catholic Parishes of the Diocese of Ljubljana during the Long Nineteenth Century**

During the long nineteenth century, seasonal and (semi-)permanent internal migrations significantly influenced decisions regarding language use in certain parishes of the Diocese of Ljubljana. In places where the vernacular deviated from the literary standard to such an extent that mutual intelligibility proved difficult – particularly in the parishes of the Gottschee region –, one encounters situations where comprehension of the literary standard was limited to those segments of the population that were involved in seasonal migrations. These differences in linguistic capabilities of different segments of the local population were thus an important factor in decisions regarding the language of sermons and religious instruction. In other cases – one such example being the parish of Domžale –, decisions regarding the language of church service were influenced by the (semi-)permanent internal migrations of speakers of a particular language to an environment where another language was predominant in everyday use. At the same time, these decisions became increasingly politicized due to advancing national differentiation. Based primarily on unpublished archival sources of ecclesiastical provenance, this paper aims to examine the impact of seasonal and (semi-)permanent internal migrations on the language policies in individual multilingual parishes of the Diocese of Ljubljana.

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Jan Bernot is a postdoctoral researcher on the FWF project "Language Diversity and Dynamic Interdependencies between Roman Catholic Church Dioceses and Dualist Austrian State Institutions". He received an award for the best doctoral dissertation in the field of humanities from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana for his doctoral dissertation *Nacionalizem, religija in ruralno prebivalstvo na Kranjskem od 1861 do 1918*. His research focuses on the intersections of nationalism and religion in the long 19th century.

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## Yugoslavia's Search for Hard Currency

### Emilija Cvetković

#### Trusted Enough? Yugoslav Diaspora and US Foreign Investment in Socialist Yugoslavia

Migration scholarship has traditionally examined emigrant remittances as monetary transfers sent to families in sending societies. This paper shifts focus to a distinct form of diaspora engagement: Yugoslav emigrants in the United States who acted as agents of economic diplomacy, facilitating joint ventures between US corporations and Yugoslav enterprises from the 1960s to the 1990s. Rather than sending money home, these emigrants channeled foreign capital, brokered business partnerships, and transferred technological and managerial knowledge across the Cold War "nylon curtain."

The paper asks what role diaspora members played in shaping Yugoslav-US joint ventures and how their involvement influenced the scale and outcomes of these investments. Drawing on archival sources and periodicals from both US and Yugoslav provenance, the analysis operates at multiple scales. At the macro level, it traces how Yugoslav state policy evolved from treating diaspora with suspicion during the 1970s to pragmatic engagement amid the 1980s economic crisis. At the meso level, it examines enabling institutions: consular networks in Cleveland, Chicago, and San Francisco, and the Center for Yugoslav-American Studies at Florida State University. At the micro level, it follows individual emigrants whose ventures, such as Milan Panić's 1990 partnership with Galenika representing one-quarter of all foreign investment that year, shaped local economies through capital infusion and knowledge transfer.

Yet did Yugoslav authorities ever fully trust the diaspora? The paper reveals a persistent gap between policy aspirations and outcomes, contributing to underexplored questions about emigrant investment as a form of engagement with sending societies in socialist Central and Southeastern Europe.

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Emilija Cvetković is a Research Assistant at the Economic History and Theory Department, Institute of Economic Sciences in Belgrade. In 2025, she completed her PhD at the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, with a dissertation on Yugoslav-American economic relations and joint ventures (1967–1991). Her MA thesis on US economic aid to Yugoslavia from 1947 to 1951 received the Andrej Mitrović Prize for best thesis in contemporary history. Her research interests include economic and business history of socialist Yugoslavia, and Yugoslav-American relations during the Cold War. She is the author of several articles and book chapters on these topics. In 2024–2025, she was a Fulbright Visiting Student Researcher at George Mason University and received a Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Research Grant for archival research in the United States. In 2024, she led the research project "Mapping the Industrial Heritage of Serbia" at the Institute of Economic Sciences.

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## Sara Žerić Đulović

### Where Do Our Devize Go? Gastarbeiter Letters, Remittances, and Imagined Homecomings

After socialist Yugoslavia liberalised labour migration to Western Europe, remittances sent by emigrants and *Gastarbeiter* became a crucial source of foreign currency. By 1970, annual inflows exceeded half a billion US dollars, a sum the Yugoslav state systematically incorporated into federal economic planning. While official discourse framed remittances as a collective developmental resource, this paper examines how migrants themselves understood the relationship between their earnings, their places of origin, and the prospect of return.

The paper draws on letters sent by Yugoslav migrant workers to the Zagreb-based newspaper *Vjesnik u srijedu* in the early 1970, during the political mobilisations known as the Croatian Spring (MASPOK). These letters reveal widespread dissatisfaction with the state-managed redistribution of remittances through federal budgets. Migrants repeatedly insisted that the foreign currency they earned abroad should remain in their home regions, where it could support local investment, employment, and eventual return. In this sense, remittances were closely tied to imaginaries of homecoming, even when physical return remained uncertain or postponed.

By analysing migrant letters as a form of political and economic commentary, the paper highlights the tension between state efforts to steer remittance flows and migrants' own expectations of regional entitlement and social justice. It argues that remittances shaped sending societies not only economically, but also by redefining ideas of belonging, return, and internal redistribution within a socialist federation. The paper thus contributes to debates on how migrants negotiated the meanings of home, return, and development in the context of state socialism.

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Sara Žerić Đulović is a social historian and has been a researcher at the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies since 2022. Her research focuses on the second half of the twentieth century, with particular emphasis on migration, labor history, and gender history in Southeast Europe. She is also an associate of the Center for Cultural and Historical Research of Socialism in Pula.

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## Lev Centrih

### **Between the Socialist State and the Self-Managed Market: Managing the Return of Slovenian Emigrants during the Economic Crises of the 1970s and 1980s**

According to the 1981 population census, 55,448 residents of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia were employed or lived abroad. From the early 1970s, in line with the policies of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and associated socio-political organizations, Slovenia witnessed declarative efforts aimed at encouraging the return of emigrants. However, the severe debt crisis that began in the late 1970s meant Slovenia was not economically capable of absorbing a larger wave of return migration without serious disruption.

This paper argues that Slovenia/Yugoslavia had already sought to limit excessive return migration years before the crisis, primarily through a strategy of gradual return. Repatriation targeted those able to secure employment via publicly advertised vacancies or personal investment in small private or socially owned enterprises. However, in the main emigration regions, socially owned firms were unable to create sufficient jobs, and the productive use of emigrant savings remained limited.

Drawing on the case of the hydraulic components factory Hypos in Muta (Carinthia), established in the 1970s with emigrant savings, and a comparable but unsuccessful attempt in Pomurje, the paper shows that Slovenian authorities largely delegated initiative to individuals and weak local economic and political actors. These actors had to provide start-up capital, find business partners, secure support from the Republican Chamber of Commerce and Ljubljanska banka, overcome political scepticism, enlist backing in the struggle with Yugoslav competitors, and navigate practical obstacles such as importing machinery from convertible-currency markets.

By 1981, Hypos in Muta remained a unique success. Meanwhile, return migration slowed, and savings were mostly directed toward household investments or deposited in foreign-currency accounts at Ljubljanska banka. Although emigrant savings rarely supported productive ventures, under the economic conditions of the 1980s, this outcome was not necessarily the worst-case scenario for the Slovenian economy.

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Lev Centrih is an Assistant Professor and Researcher at the University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities, Department of History, in Koper, where he teaches a range of courses in modern Slovenian and European social history. He is also a Researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana, where his work focuses on Slovenian environmental and social history.

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## Temporary Work Amid Shifting Political Spaces

### Neja Blaj Hribar

#### **Migrant Workers and Day Labourers from Other Yugoslav Banovinas in Ljubljana in the 1930s**

The paper will focus on both permanently settled and seasonal (temporal) workers. Temporary labour migration had been characteristic of Southeast Europe since the Ottoman period. Many arrived in Habsburg monarchy as well, for example, more than eighty Macedonian workers participated in the construction of the railway in Upper Carniola. During the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, migration toward the western parts of the country intensified further.

Research into these migrations is complicated by a lack of sources, as the records of companies employing such workers are poorly preserved, while residence registrations in cities are scattered. Seasonal workers are also frequently omitted from population censuses, which were usually conducted in December, when many had already returned to their home regions. From this perspective, the Yugoslav census of 1931, conducted in March, is particularly suitable for research. The main source for the study will therefore be the microdata from the Ljubljana census. The analysis will include all migrants born in the selected regions who listed a worker or day-labourer position in industry as their occupation. The data will provide insight into their sectors of employment and demographic characteristics. The analysis will also address issues related to the housing and social crisis in Ljubljana. The period under study coincides with the economic crisis, the expansion of public works, and numerous strikes, particularly in the construction sector. The quantitative analysis will be complemented by newspaper sources, which will offer insight into public and media discourses surrounding these workers.

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Neja Blaj Hribar is a historian employed in the Research Infrastructure Programme at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana (Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino). Between 2016 and 2018, she coordinated the project *Military Casualties of the First World War in the Slovene Lands*, and since 2019, she has been leading the project *Slovenian Censuses 1830-1931*. She is completing her PhD at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Her doctoral dissertation is entitled "*Immigrants from the Yugoslav Lands in Ljubljana in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*." Her research interests include the history of migration and the development of political ideologies from the late nineteenth century onwards, among other approaches drawing on digital humanities methods.

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## Veronika Kupková

### **The Pressnitzer „travelling folks“: (Un)easy returns home. A case study of the itinerant musicians from Bohemia**

In the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century, Pressnitz used to be known as the “*Musikstadt*”. Its citizen, mainly women, travelled regularly long distances with “*Damenkapellen*” in order to improve their living with music performances. Their steps led to domestic towns, but also to the cultural and economic centres, incl. Regensburg, Trieste, Sarajevo, Mariupol or Helsinki. Moreover, some of them performed at the opening ceremony of the Suez Canal, in India or the US.

Music as labour had evolved into a specific form of economic migration of the Pressnitzers, enabling them to establish an own, state-funded music school there. Music, together with the raising horizontal mobility, offered new opportunities (social mobility) and helped to finance a. a. the reconstruction of their hometown or investments abroad. On the other hand, the itinerant musicians- women had to face the patriarchal social structures and exploitative labour conditions.

The established mobility patterns collapsed after WWI. The interwar period enabled only a limited number of bands (domestic mobility). Additionally, the Pressnitzers were affected by the forced migration after WWII, which profoundly influenced the memory-making processes across the region (trans-national vs. “national” heritage). Paradoxically, some of the Pressnitzer expellees reached the areas where they performed fifty years ago.

This so-far insufficiently examined phenomenon addresses return migration combining multiple scales (micro-mesomacro) but also gaps (practices on tour, minority culture, post-displacement landscape, borderland). The interdisciplinary approach thus prevents this case from remaining “in-between” and suggests further investigation and joint actions in Europe and beyond.

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Veronika Kupková is an educator with teaching experience from Czechia, Denmark and Myanmar, and designing educational projects. She studied Geography and Social Sciences at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. As a project coordinator, with an interest in Czech-German relationships, she has led multiple Czech-German educational projects dealing with i.e. place-based learning, dissonant heritage and landscape memory. Veronika is based in North-West Czechia and currently enrolled as a PhD candidate at the University of J. E. Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem, researching about “lost” cultural heritage (Pressnitz) and possible ways of its interpretation.

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## Mladen Zobec

### **Return migration, postsocialism, and the stalled expansion of the Polog Albanians' Migrant Economy**

The migrant economy of Polog Albanians thrived during and across Yugoslav socialism. With the onset of postsocialist transition, however, its growth stalled. Although some older Albanian migrant businesses professionalised, strengthened their brand recognizability, and branched out, comparatively few entirely new establishments emerged. Focusing on Slovenia in the postsocialist period, the article argues that migrants' orientation toward "return" was crucial for the Polog Albanians' growth model. When migrants stopped permanently returning to Polog, the expansion of their migrant economy in Slovenia slowed dramatically. While this tendency existed even before Yugoslavia's disintegration, it accelerated in the postsocialist era. The article thus addresses not only the paradox that transition to market economy narrowed rather than broadened entrepreneurial opportunities for a group of migrant, but also how misalignments between historical time, the life course of a migrant economy, and individual trajectories can bring about unexpected outcomes.

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**Mladen Zobec** is a sociologist (PhD Uni Graz, BA, MA Uni Ljubljana). He specialises in the Balkans with a focus on the social and economic history of Yugoslavia, labour migration, ethnic migrant entrepreneurship, and socialist modernity. He lives and works between Ljubljana and Vienna.

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**Internal Migration Patterns from Imperial Rule to State Socialism**

**Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić**

**Encountering the Plain: Problems in the Settlement and Adaptation of Colonists to Life in Vojvodina in the First Years After the Second World War**

Based on archival research conducted in the Archive of Yugoslavia, selected periodicals, and secondary literature, this paper examines the postwar colonization of Vojvodina through three interconnected perspectives: the legal framework that enabled settlement, the challenges colonists faced during migration and resettlement, and the broader consequences of this mass population movement. Following the Second World War, Yugoslavia experienced major demographic shifts. The confiscation of German-owned property (1944), the Law on Agrarian Reform and Colonization (1945), and the Decree on the Implementation of Veterans' Settlement provided the legal basis for organized settlement in Vojvodina and Slavonia. Between 1945 and 1946, around 40,000 families from Yugoslavia's poorest regions migrated in search of better living conditions. However, poor organization, frequent changes in plans, and unequal distribution of housing, livestock, and farming equipment caused frustration and social tensions among settlers. Colonists from mountainous areas also struggled to adapt to lowland agriculture, often experiencing declining yields. Although colonization temporarily reduced agrarian overpopulation, long-term effects included continued land fragmentation and subsistence farming. While nearly 4,000 families eventually returned home, those who remained gradually adapted to new social and economic conditions.

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*Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić* (1975) is a principal research fellow at the Institute of Contemporary History in Belgrade, Serbia. Her research focuses on state repression in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the industrialization of socialist Yugoslavia, the living standards of ordinary people, rural-urban migrations, the life of youth in socialist Yugoslavia, and family planning. She was a visiting researcher at the Imre Kertesz College in Jena, the Institute for the Study of the History of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in Regensburg, and the Institute for the History of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in Graz. She has written three monographs and over 80 scientific papers published in Serbian and international journals.

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## Nataša Simeunović Bajić

### Tripartite Transmediality of the "Eighth Offensive": Internal Migration and Cultural Transformation in Post-War Vojvodina

In this paper, I investigate post-war migration in Yugoslavia by confronting official state myths with the raw memories of those who lived through them. The research centers on Branko Ćopić's novels *The Eighth Offensive* and *Don't Grieve, Bronze Guard*, their 1979 TV adaptation, and original ethnographic fieldwork in the Banat village of Krajišnik. The village's shifting names, from Stefansfeld to Šupljaja and finally Krajišnik, map a history of violent border changes and population upheavals. While the socialist state glorified the mass resettlement from the Dinaric hinterland to the Vojvodina plains as a necessary economic and political act, this study looks at the friction beneath the optimism. Oral history serves as a tool to capture the grit of displacement. Through interviews in Krajišnik, I explore how settlers grappled with a world defined by the absence of the expelled Danube Swabians. These families did not move into a vacuum; they stepped directly into the intimate lives of the "other." They inherited the houses, gardens, and even the furniture of those forced out. These domestic spaces, with their alien layouts and lingering ghosts, became the real battlegrounds for belonging. Some never found a sense of home and retreated to their native regions shortly after. By weaving together literature, TV series, and personal testimony, the research reveals the heavy human price of state-mandated mobility. Ultimately, this work shows that cultural adaptation was never a clean process, but a messy, resilient struggle to make someone else's house a home.

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Nataša Simeunović Bajić, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, where she teaches in the fields of Media, Communication, and Cultural Studies, including the course *Media Representation of the Past*. She has led and participated in numerous national and international research projects and is the recipient of several international research fellowships. Her academic work explores the intersections of communication, culture, and media, with a particular interest in popular culture, collective memory, and the creative industries in post-socialist and European contexts. Simeunović Bajić's research combines perspectives from media studies, cultural sociology, and heritage communication, analyzing how media narratives shape cultural identity, public discourse, and social transformation.

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## Fatos Hoxha

### Labour Migration and Social Change in the Trepça mining complex in Kosovo during 1960-1980

This paper examines internal migration as a form of circular mobility that influenced social transformation, and later international migration in socialist Kosovo, focusing on the Trepça mining complex. While Kosovo path in Yugoslavia is often analysed through the lens of emigration and diaspora, the paper argues that large-scale internal migration, from rural villages to industrial and mining centres was equally formative and functioned as a precursor and complement to international mobility.

Drawing on archival sources, workers' testimonies, and enterprise-level analysis, the paper shows how industrial workplaces such as Trepça were presented as sites of modernization, social mobility, and integration, absorbing rural populations into socialist institutions through employment, housing, education, and political participation. Yet this framing obscured persistent regional inequalities, labour precarity, and the limited capacity of heavy industry to sustain long-term social advancement. At the local level, internal migration reconfigured household economies, gender roles, and settlement patterns. Migrants maintained strong ties to their villages of origin, investing wages in housing, land, and family support, producing effects comparable to remittances associated with international migration. Periodic returns, weekly, seasonal, or episodic blurred distinctions between departure and homecoming, embedding mobility within everyday social life.

The paper further argues that internal migration trajectories were structurally connected to later international migration. Chronic unemployment, uneven development and political instability transformed internally mobile workers into a reserve labour force for transnational movement. By linking internal migration, return practices, and state discourse, the paper contributes to broader debates on circular mobility, development, and the entanglement of domestic and international migration in Southeastern Europe.

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Fatos Hoxha is a doctoral researcher at Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies at University of Regensburg since April 2023 with the thesis title "Transformation from below: Understanding workers' lives in the Trepça industrial complex in Kosovo during 1960-1980". Master's degree in Global Political Economy from University of Kassel, and a bachelor's degree in Economic Sciences from University of Prishtina. Research focus on labour history, social and economic history and transformation, and political economy.

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