Editorial

Introduction

This special issue of the journal contains selected papers from the Third Annual Conference of the Western Balkans Migration Network (WB-MIGNET), which took place at the University College Effectus for Law and Finance, Zagreb, 25–26 May 2018. The overall theme of the conference was broad, as indicated by its title, "A search for that special place under the sun in modern Europe: migration in the twenty-first century". At the same time, this evocative title hints at the changes in rationales, modalities and destinations for contemporary migrants, who themselves are becoming more diverse in their nature. Reflecting its location in Zagreb, the conference had a specialisation on the Balkans, and the three papers which follow are examples of this regional focus, treating in turn Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia.

The papers, and the conference as a whole, draw attention to new dynamics of migratory movement in Europe. As a number of recent statistical overviews have shown (Baláž and Karasová, 2017; King and Okólski, 2019), these patterns of change involve several fundamental features. Over the long time-span from the early postwar decades to the present, the geographical axis of the main intra-European migration flows has rotated from South-North to East-West, consequent upon the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the eastward enlargement of the European Union. During the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, mass labour migration took millions of workers from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey to the factories and construction sites of France, Germany, Switzerland, the Benelux countries and Scandinavia. During the 1990s and especially the 2000s, mass migration from countries such as Poland and Romania (quantitatively the most important sources of migrants), but also from the other Central and Eastern European countries which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, replaced the Southern Europeans as Western Europe's "reserve army" of migrant labour.

The Balkan region complicates and even subverts this simple spatio-temporal shift. First, from the 1960s on, Yugoslavia broke with the communist-bloc practice of proscribing migration and allowed its people to seek work in North-West Europe as *Gastarbeiter*, "guestworkers". Like the parallel guestworker streams from other Southern European countries, these

short-term labour migrations evolved into permanent settlement in the host countries, although some returns took place, especially in the wake of the oil crises in the 1970s and 1980s. Secondly, ethno-national tensions and the break-up of Yugoslavia in the later 1980s and 1990s produced not only a new geopolitical map of the Balkans but also sparked refugee flows, mainly of Bosnians and Kosovans, but also of Croats, Serbs and others who were caught in situations of violent ethnic conflict. These refugees found new homes in a variety of North-West European countries, although for some the sanctuary was not permanent and various "forced" and "assisted" repatriation schemes were implemented.

Meanwhile, and thirdly, a human exodus of epic proportions took place in the early 1990s from Albania where, within a decade, roughly a quarter of the population left for Greece, Italy and elsewhere. For the most part, these Albanian migrations were not "legal"; migrants crossed the border into neighbouring Greece, or traversed the Adriatic Sea to Italy in boats, in an "irregular" and "undocumented" fashion (which also made it difficult to estimate the scale of these flows). The Albanian experience also proved to be the harbinger of the fourth trend evident in the evolving migrations from the Balkan region: the increasing tendency for young, more educated persons, including recent university graduates, to emigrate (King and Gëdeshi, 2019). Intellectual unemployment and frustrated ambitions seem to be the new drivers of emigration, not only from the Balkans, but also from countries like Italy, Spain and Greece where the effects of the 2008 economics crisis were particularly severe for the young, educated cohorts of the population (Lafleur and Stanec, 2017).

The 2008 crisis constitutes the fifth trend framing contemporary European and Balkan migration dynamics. Theoretically, the impact of an economic crisis can change a country's migration flows in multiple ways. It can provoke an increase in emigration and dampen down flows of immigrants. And it can stimulate the return migration of immigrants in the crisis-affected country, and diminish the incentive to return-migrate of that country's emigrants abroad. A crisis can also have other effects on migration dynamics. If the immigrants in a country impacted by crisis do not want to return home (perhaps because their own country is also crisis-ridden), they may decide to onward-migrate to a "third" country. Or, return migrations may take place for other than economic reasons, and instead be shaped by more emotional or lifestyle reasons, or be related to patterns of study abroad and return. With these latter remarks, I am already making links to some of the key findings of the three papers which follow.

The papers

The first paper, by *King and Karamoschou*, is built on the first author's opening keynote speech to the conference, and elaborates more broadly, and in more detail, some of the points made above about the evolving character of migration in Europe and the Balkans. In particular, it explores the specific migratory phenomenon of onward migration and reviews already-researched case studies from different European contexts. The second part of the paper is devoted to a case study of the onward migration of Albanians in Greece to the United Kingdom and is based on the second author's master's thesis (Karamoschou, 2018). Greece was the EU country most deeply affected by the "eurozone crisis", and Albanians, who are by far the most numerous immigrant group in Greece, became heavily impacted by falling incomes and unemployment. Unable to sustain their livelihoods in Greece, they had two choices: either return to Albania, or migrate onward to somewhere else. The latter option was only available to those who had in the meantime acquired Greek citizenship and therefore the "European" passport. For the rest, return to Albania is the default option, but for many this has been a reluctant return because the country is still economically challenged and beset by corruption. For those who can move on, many have chosen the UK, because this country hosts what is probably, after Greece and Italy, the third largest Albanian-origin population in Europe (although statistics are only approximate on this), and because it has a buoyant economy and an open labour market where, especially in the London region, newly-arrived migrants can find entry-level jobs quite quickly.

As the different parts of Europe continue to make uneven economic, social and political progress, so the phenomenon of onward migration is likely to expand. Based on the evidence of Albanians and from other onward-migrating groups which have been studied (see the literature review in King and Karamoschou's paper), two factors will facilitate this development. The first is acquisition of the host country's citizenship by "third-country" migrants and refugees, which gives them automatic right to "free movement" and access to employment within the EU and the Schengen Area. The second is the growing sedimentation of migrant and refugee groups across various European countries and the cross-diaspora knowledge which develops about opportunities, conditions and lifestyles in other countries which might be more attractive than the first country of settlement.

The second paper, by *Aida Ibričević*, is a unique contribution to the expanding scholarship on Bosnian refugees and their settlement and return. The originality of her paper lies in its explicit use of the trope of "emotion" to frame Bosnian voluntary return migration to a post-conflict society. This framing takes place across multiple dimensions: the primarily emotional (rather than economic) motivation for the return, encapsulated in the phrase "patriotic love"; the role of fear as the key emotion constituting returnees' daily experiences of living back in their homeland; and the intriguing notion of "emotional citizenship" – the way in which individuals perceive citizenship affectively, as a "feeling", rather than as a set of rights granted by states, or of duties to be performed by citizens. Given that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a "stock" of its migrants abroad which is second only to Albania when measured as a fraction of the national population, there is considerable demographic potential for return migration. However, obstacles to a large-scale return are considerable. Many refugees have "lost" their original home as a result of destruction and the ethnic remapping of the federated state into Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Ibričević quotes the important paper by political geographers Dahlman and Ó Tuathail (2005) in specifying the contradictions at the heart of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accord which ended the Bosnian war. On the one hand was the Agreement's partition of Bosnia into mono-ethnic spaces; on the other was the peace plan's guarantee that refugees could return to their original homes, which in some cases were in areas which had been "ethnically cleansed". As a result, many of her returnee interviewees were consumed by the emotion of fear, which manifested itself in three ways: ethnic discrimination, economic insecurity, and political corruption. Finally, in another manifestation of the "emotional turn" in migration studies, it is hard not to react emotionally to the courage of the interviewees in attempting to sustain their resettlement projects, and indeed to the emotional involvement of the researcher herself.

The third paper is also about return, but of a different kind. *Milica Vesković Anđelković* and *Mirjana Bobić* look at the return migration of highly educated Serbs, focusing especially on their modified identity as a result of having lived abroad in a "Western" country. The authors apply two conceptual paradigms to their study of returnee identity: a primordial one, which presupposes that migrants retain their national identity despite being exposed to the cultures, customs and values of the host society which they had spent time in; and a more malleable social constructivist identity, which is further

delineated into two subtypes. The first variation combines a "hard core" of national identity with transnational ties, influences and values; the second subtype is a more thoroughly hybrid form which is also fluid, open to new influences, and not grounded in any specific culture. It is important to point out that all of the authors' 50 interviewees are highly educated returnee graduates, mostly involved in academic careers. In other respects, they are a heterogenous group, made up of students who studied abroad and then returned, as well as returnees who had all their higher education in Serbia and then emigrated. Ages range from 30 to 65. The timing of return also varies, from older informants who returned during the Milošević years (1989–2000) to younger interviewees who returned both before and after the 2008 economic crisis. The sample was also extremely diverse in terms of the countries they had studied and/or worked in, mostly in North America and various European countries.

The results are interesting if rather blurred across the age and time-of-return categories. Intriguingly, many interviewees had difficulty coping with questions about their identity; indeed 19 of the 50 could not respond to an apparently simple question on how they perceived their national identity. This is because, in reality, such a question is far from simple. It also presumes that people have thought deeply about their identity and have a ready-made answer to give to the interviewer. Overall, a relationship was found between length of time spent abroad (and hence progressive social inclusion there) and a diminution of allegiance to a Serbian national identity. Other interviewees professed a profound national identity, coupled with loyalty to family, friends and their place of origin and return – generally Belgrade. Yet others saw national identity as deeply problematic within the shifting and traumatic political landscape of the Western Balkans, and sought to distance themselves from Serbian nationalism.

Taken together, it is hoped that the three papers constitute a significant, if small and selective, contribution to understanding the changing dynamics of European and especially Balkan migration. On a European, and especially EU plane, what goes on in the Balkans as regards migration is too frequently overlooked, and this set of papers helps to rectify this oversight.

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