NARRATING BELONGING IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

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The article questions the validity of the notion of multiple or shifting migrant identities. I argue that such usages of identity in some transnationalism and migration regime studies and in policymaking may serve to label migrants as different. What is ignored by such accounts is that belonging is not free-floating but is situated and contextually bounded, while making "positive" identitary claims may mask the actual structural inequalities. Alternative conceptualizations are explored in which I use the concept of narration and storytelling that better describes migrants' contextualized realities. The theoretical argument is coupled with empirical research in which various types of belonging in the post-Yugoslav context are explored using biographical interviews with migrants who live in Slovenia.

KEY WORDS: identity, hybrid identity, migrant belonging, narration, former Yugoslavia

IZVLEČEK

Naracije o pripadanju v postjugoslovanskem kontekstu

Članek prevprašuje veljavnost pojma multiplih ali hibridnih identitet, pri čemer je v ospredju argumentacija, da takšna raba v nekaterih študijah transnacionalizma in migracijskih režimov lahko poustvarja migrante kot druge in drugačne. Česar ta raba ne izpostavi, je, da pripadanja niso nekaj abstraknega, ampak so situirane in kontekstualizirane izkušnje, medtem ko stavljenje na »pozitivne« identitete lahko učinkuje kot maskiranje strukturnih neenakosti. Besedilo se posveča alternativnim konceptualizacijam z uporabo naracije in pripovedovanja zgodb, ki bolje kot identitete zaobjamejo kontekstualizirane realnosti migracij. Teoretska argumentacija je podkrepljena z rezultati empirične raziskave, kjer je v ospredju razprava o pripadanju v post-jugoslovanskem kontekstu na podlagi biografskih intervjujev z migrant v Sloveniji.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: identiteta, hibridna identitita, pripadanje migrantov, naracija, nekdanja Jugoslavija

INTRODUCTION

Basing my argument on critical analyses of identity as a concept, mainly taken from the literature of social theory (esp. Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Anthias 2002, 2001; Yuval-Davis 2006; Delanty et al. 2008), I take a sceptical view towards the value of various kinds of postmodernist or poststructuralist "fluid"

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conceptualizations of identity that have been flourishing in the last two or three decades. While on the one hand attempts to make the concept more fluid by arguing for "constructed", "multiple" or "negoti-ated" identities allow various identities to proliferate and produce the intermeshing of various forms of subjectivity, on the other they force us to question the very analytical value of the concept. In particular, it is questionable whether the notion of fluid identities allows us to see that migrants' living experiences are contextually bounded and often dependant on external categorization. As sociological analyses (ibid.) have shown, hybrid identities might appear as "too bright", connoting the belief that migrants can always negotiate their identities, and this bypasses situations when migrants' lives are shaped by unequal power relations, ethnic bias and racial exclusion. These relations are contextually bounded and the above mentioned literature has rightly criticized that hybridity might obscure the real-life alienation marginalized groups are faced with. It is thus an important unwanted consequence of the use of fluid or hybrid identities that such conceptualizations may mask structural inequalities that are produced by social power relations. For example, pursuing the notion of bright identities can excuse political institutions from being truly active in the field of preventing inequality.[1] Also, they may downplay the problematical character of imposed identities or of processes of external identifications, such as label-ling migrants as "third country nationals", "Muslims", "Bosniaks" etc. that reproduces "otherness" and can also serve the goals of populist and racist rhetoric.

It would be too presumptuous, in regard of numerous theoretical debates and historical develop-ments, to simply argue against the concept of identity and its utility. This is not the intention of this article. After all, identity claims played an important role in mobilizing the civil society movements of the 1960s, 70s and 80s that helped to bring issues of the oppression of minorities and marginalized groups into the public agenda. At the same time, it's nothing new to argue that the concept of identity has been overused, that it has become a cliché and that it is "in crisis" (Erikson 1968). The profusion of identity claims can make us question the theoretical and analytical validity of the concept when this is applied to understandings of contemporary globalization and transnationalization processes experi-enced by populations. Some studies of migration and transnationalism (cf. Ong 1999; Bauböck 1994; Levitt 2001; Pries 2001) or of EU migration regimes (O'Neill 2006) have used the notions of multiple, hybrid or fragmented identities where it appears that these categories are naturalized in their use, i.e. in the studies, but don't really deal with potential problems with notions of identity. When "flexible citizen-ship" is promoted in transnationality studies (Ong 1999) one questions whether it really points to the "nonessentialized nature of culture" (ibid.) The opposite could also be true, i.e. that arguing for multiple identities might obscure the situations when migrant cultures are stigmatized for being essentialist. This is certainly not the only way to use identity,[2] but it is a way of dealing with it when understand-ing migrants' transnationalisms. A notable exception is *Transnationalism and Identity* by Vertovec (2001) who focuses on theorizing links between transnationalism and identity (see also Benton and Gomez 2008). My purpose here is to look critically at transpositions of the notion of hybrid or multiple identities to migration studies, particularly in studies of migrants' transnational and migration regimes. I am there-

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1 One example are recently adopted integration programs in some EU member states when migrants who fail to pass integration tests are denied social benefits or a visa (see Kontos 2011 for the example of Germany). The analyses have shown how migrants are expected to manoeuvre, be fluid and adaptable to various integration tests. Migrants can't question the tests but only fulfil the obligations, which points to unequal power relations and a lack of shared responsibility in the relation between the migrant and the state (policies).

2 Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 6–7) distinguish five uses of identity: 1. identity used to understand that action might be governed by self-understandings rather than self-interest; 2. identity denoting sameness among group members; 3. identity understood as a vital aspect of self-hood, a foundational dimension contrary to su-perficial attributes of the self; 4. identity-stimulating developments of collective self-understanding, specifically in social movement literature where identity generates solidarity that makes collective action possible; and 5. identity understood as a fragmented and hybrid self. For an analysis of various uses of identity in theory but also in empirical research, see Fearon (1999).

fore concerned with one of the ways identity is used in literature on migration that has been inspired by constructivist, poststructuralist or postmodernist attempts, including cultural studies (particularly influenced by Foucault 1972; Butler 1990; Hall 1990, 1996) that aim at rescuing identity from the traps of universalism and essentialism. The inspiration for this article comes not only from interesting theoretical debates over identity, but from migrants' own narrations as well. The empirical argument of the article stems from the research that used biographical narrative interviews to capture stories of migrants in Slovenia.[3]

EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

If we accept the notion that identities are constructed and in constant flux, how can we explain the situated, not abstract, belonging of migrants? That is, how are multiple migrant identities congruent with the uniform migration policy that still has the effect of labelling migrants as a group of non-integrated outsiders (cf. Balibar 2004)? I am therefore expressing scepticism towards the usefulness of the notion of multiple or shifting migrant identities. I argue that such usages of identity may serve to demarcate migrants as different. What is ignored by such accounts is, first, that narrations of belonging are not free-floating but are situated and bounded up in and by particular contexts. Second, notions of multiple identities connote "bright" identities, always capable of adjusting to circumstances. Such identities promoted, for example, in the studies on cosmopolitanism (cf. Hannerz 1996) are well captured by the notion of "plastic citizenship" (Lazaridis and Konsta 2011), where identities are believed to be adjustable to any circumstances. As such they apparently result in empowerment. But, speaking in the context of migration, they might appear as concepts that tend to underplay the real-life exclusion, alienation and ghettoization of migrant populations that is produced by unequal power relations. Having a fragmented identity doesn't stop marginalization, and "plastic identities" should be critically scrutinized for their potential to obscure exclusion. Bright conceptualizations of identity can best serve the migrating elite, the contemporary cosmopolitans who hold the right passports and whose jobs are classified as being of national or global importance (cf. Hannerz 1996).

Uses of the notion of multiple identity (fluxual, negotiated, multilayered, fragmented, shifting, hybrid etc.),[4] when this is not critically scrutinized but, for example, just transposed into policy, don't do away with essentialism but actually reproduce the essentialism problem in identity. The reason for this is that the mere semantic additions to identity can't restore the analytical value of the concept, as they don't recognize the seriousness of the problem of essentialism (cf. Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Anthias 2002). Lack of recognition results in the notion of multiple identity actually reproducing the essentialist stratum "through the back door" (Anthias 2002: 494) and it shifts attention away from the context. It is also too simplistic to label migrant identities as fragmented or multiple since this would make us believe that certain identities, that is migrant identities, are more prone to being multiple than others. Also, such labelling of migrants' multiple identities in the above mentioned transnationalism and migration regime studies and in policymaking without proper reflection neglects the many migrant *narrations* that are "hard" and "highly situated", and not "soft" and "free-floating". Such understanding of identity can thus be critically viewed as shifting the focus of analysis away from "hard" social context, not to mention specifically the "hard" policies migrants are subjected to.

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3 Biographical narrative interviews were conducted in Slovenia as part of the 6FP project FeMiPol, Integration of Female Immigrants in the Labour Market and Society: Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations, 2006–2008, and within the project PRIMTS, Prospects for Integration of Migrants from "Third Countries" and their Labour Market Situation: Towards Policies and Action. For more on this, see project websites available at http://www.femipol.uni-frankfurt.de/, http://www.primts-mirovni-institut.si.

4 Cf. Anthias (2001) for an inspiring critique of the notion of "hybridity".

I acknowledge that the various attempts to "rescue" identity have not been ill-intentioned. Conceptualizations of hybrid identities in poststructuralism, cultural studies or studies on globalization in particular had the intention of reformulating identity with the purpose to discharge it from objections of essentialism. These reformulations, however, start from a point that recognizes identity as an indispensable concept. Interestingly, Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 9) are of different opinion and, in contrast to Judith Butler, Stuart Hall, Alberto Melucci and others who have been using and reconceptualising identity in its fluidity, argue against the concept being indispensable, and urge us to "go beyond identities", particularly "in the name of the conceptual clarity" (ibid.: 36). "If one wants to examine the meanings and significance people give to constructs such as "race", "ethnicity", and "nationality" ... it is not clear what one gains by aggregating them under the flattening rubric of identity" (ibid.: 9).

It's not my intention here to argue for or against identity but to challenge the ascription of the notion of hybrid identities to migrants. Treating migrant identities as *de facto* multiple can have the effect that is precisely the opposite to what hybrid identities want to do, that is, the avoidance of essentialism. Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 11) remind us that "weak or soft conceptions of identity are routinely packaged with standard qualifiers indicating that identity is multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated, and so on. These qualifiers have become so familiar – indeed obligatory – in recent years that one reads (and writes) them virtually automatically. They risk becoming mere placeholders, gestures signalling a stance rather than words conveying a meaning" (ibid: 11).

Along these lines it seems that mere labelling of migrant identity as a fluid one has become nearly a meaningless phrase, particularly when such labelling is just adopted and not analysed or evaluated. The result might be the poor treatment of migrants' narrations and self-perceptions of belonging or their reduction to the "one-dimensionality" of meaningless multiplicity. The various prefixes to identity don't really solve the "problem of identity". By adding prefixes we preserve identity and, unless the concepts of hybrid and multiple migrant identities are thoroughly reflected in their transpositions to migration studies, these studies simply add to further mystifications around migrant identities.

Are we to preserve the concept, to denounce it, or to propose a new one? Although all seem tempting options, the solutions they offer are too linear, which is the reason that I don't find it very productive to choose between them. Despite this fact, or maybe because of it, I would like to explore some alternative conceptualizations to postmodernist identity claims that might offer a more valid theoretical approach to understanding migrants' belonging. In their claims against the indispensability of identity, supported by the belief that it is "fruitless to look for a single substitute," Brubaker and Cooper (ibid: 14–21) propose alternative analytical idioms as "three clusters of terms" that I also find useful for grasping migrants' belonging.

First, they define *identification and categorization* as concepts that invite us to specify the agents that do the identifying. The terms refer to a number of different situations in everyday life (to characterize oneself, to place oneself in a category, to locate oneself in relation to others etc.). Relational identification refers to positioning oneself in a relational web while categorical identification means identifying by claiming membership (class, race, ethnicity, nationality, citizenship, etc.). They also distinguish self-identification from identification and characterization of oneself by others. Secondly, they propose *self-understanding and social location* as an alternative to identity that point to a notion of "situated subjectivity", i.e. the question of one's sense of oneself, of social placing and of one's action. Since identity implies "sameness across time or persons", self-understanding, to the contrary, may vary across time and space but may also be stable. Thirdly, the authors propose *commonality, connectedness,* and *groupness* as more differentiated terms that better capture belonging to specific groups where commonality denotes the sharing of connectedness, the relational ties among people, and groupness the sense of belonging to a specific bounded group. Rather than celebrating fluidity, these notions are used to grasp the multiple forms of commonality and the different ways in which actors make meaning out of them (ibid.). The three sets of terms provide an interesting alternative to identity, a concept that, according to the authors, has lost its analytical value to its ambiguity, contradictory meanings and reifying

connotations (ibid.: 34). Let me add that I find this combination of clusters as a response to claims of identity interesting. However, it should be noted that the issues addressed by the clusters are nothing new, and that notions of ethnicity, issues of collective identity and debates over groups have a long and contested history (cf. Barth 1969; Cohen 1974; Anderson 1983; Jenkins 1991). The argument of this article is on the one hand inspired by interesting theoretical debates about identity that have recently emerged in social theory literature and gender studies (cf. Anthias 2001, 2002; Yuval-Davis 2006; Somers 1994; Fearon 1999; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Delanty et al. 2008; in the Slovenian context see Lukšič-Hacin 1999; Milharčič Hladnik 2007; Milharčič Hladnik and Lukšič-Hacin 2011), and on the other hand it is based on research that used biographical narrative interviews to capture stories of migrants in Slovenia. I limit my empirical material to interviews that were conducted with migrants who have come to Slovenia since 2000 from the former Yugoslav republics, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia, with the purpose to be able to explore the mosaic of belonging and of "post-Yugoslav belonging". In her research on British-born youngsters of Asian and Cypriot background, Floya Anthias (2002) claimed that the "narrated sense of belonging and not belonging could not be captured by the notion of identity" (ibid: 492). The analysis of the interviews with migrants from the former Yugoslavia has also shown that the notion of identity is too contested a term to capture the meanings of the migrants' narrations. While Brubaker and Cooper (2000) propose *commonality, connectedness and groupness* as analytical categories, Anthias replaces the notion of identity used in addressing issues that are usually linked to "collective identity" with notions of *location and positionality* (or *translocational positionality*). She further argues that identity is of limited "heuristic value" since it does not capture the situational character of narration, its non-fixity, its revisions and changes. Its conceptual disability lies in the fact that it "moves the analysis away from context, meaning and practice" (ibid: 492).

Anthias claims that translocational positionality, unlike identity, captures "spatial and contextual dimensions, treating the issues involved in terms of processes rather than possessive properties of individuals (as in 'who are you?' being replaced by 'what and how have you?')" (ibid: 494). The concept involves identification but it also values "lived practices" that shape identification. It is particularly useful in migration studies because it refers to types of belonging that are clearly shaped around the constructions of ethnicity, gender and class (cf. Yuval-Davis 2006, 2007). This is an interesting concept that helps us to dismiss personal circumstances, such as ethnicity, as a possessive property of individuals (migrants as holders of ethnicity) or an inherent characteristic of a person. The value of the concept should specifically be sought in its capacity to treat identity as a process and to centralize the analysis around context. Particularly for migration studies it is important, as stressed by Anthias (2002: 499), that locations are also "dislocations and alterity" that refer to various types of physical and symbolic belonging that are not fixed in time and space.

NARRATIVE: CAPTURING CONTEXTUALIZED IDENTIFICATION THROUGH STORYTELLING

This section is devoted to the exploration of the notion of narration that is put forward as a more appropriate concept that affords a more accurate study of migrants' belonging and identifications. While staying with identity, Margaret Somers proposes the inclusion of the concept of narrative with the purpose to destabilize the dimensions of time, space and relationality. She proposes the notion of "narrative identity" (Somers 1994). I find the concept of narrative of great value particularly for understanding migrants' belonging. A narrative is positioned and it clarifies senses of belonging that cut across territorial and cultural boundaries. Narrations don't represent but rather take as a starting point an individual's activity in the world. Some authors (for example Milharčič Hladnik 2007) claim that the narrator's identity is positioned and constructed through narration. Narration as such is not an attribute of identity as

claimed by Somers but in a Bourdieudian sense an expression per se of one's belonging or affiliation. Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 12) make an interesting point when they question why Somers links narrative to identity; they ask: "what does this soft, flexible notion of identity add to the argument about narrative" and "why it is identities that are constituted through narratives".

Considering this criticism brings us to a proposition to treat narrative, or, "storytelling" to use a formulation by Hannah Arendt (1967) as an account of more or less situated belonging to the world, to society, to people etc. (cf. Pajnik 2008). I propose that it suffices to speak of a narrative in itself without linking it to identity. The concept of narrative identity implies that identity is constructed through a narrative. Somers argues that people construct identities by locating themselves in stories. Such an approach tends to obscure the great potential of the narrative that actually goes beyond making identity claims.

My proposition is to conceptualize narrative as such, not linking it to identity, which shifts some of the arguments proposed by Somers: if a narrative or storytelling is conceptualized as a process of positioning and expressing various types of belonging in time and space, then it seems that the concept doesn't need identity as some omnipotent, far-reaching goal. I argue that the full accounts of stories are better used and explained by the concept of "narration" and not "narrative identity". Unlike identity, the concept of narrative urges us always to view stories in relation to the context in which they are told. The way in which a story is told is as important as its content. On another occasion, it would be a different story with a different meaning and told in a different manner, which is to say that stories are told in time and space. They are composed of situated fragments that address various practices and actions, accounts of the world, the nation, the state, the family, economic and social life etc.

Read with Arendt, it is narration, not identity, that should be seen as a performance, as a citizens' activity that is of public value. Storytelling both as a concept and also as a method of analysis (i.e. the biographical narrative interview, cf. Pajnik and Bajt 2009) actually leaves more room than the concept of identity to express and define belonging, and as such appears broader and more useful than identity. It embraces the process of "telling", it is about telling a story in one's own terms in time and space. It is a process that produces meaning for specificities in context. "The narrative is also both a story about who and what we identify with (a story about identification) and is also a story about our practices and the practices of others, including wider social practices and how we experience them" (Anthias 2002: 498–499).

The narration of belonging places the actor in the world and within social structures that also shape narrator's life in reality. Stories as they are told usually don't have a structure of a text that has a beginning, plot and end, but are fragmented accounts about various aspects of living in the world. Stories are positioned in time and locations, they provide differing accounts of the self and relations of the self to various others, and they also are about social structures or constraints in society (Mishler 1986). Actually, what is of particular value in the concept of narration is that it not only refers to personhood, to the individual, but it also invites us to explore personal accounts that are of a systemic nature. The method is suggestive of ways in which individuals experience and cope with social realities. Its emphasis is on individuals' personal history, knowledge, experiences, constraints, assumptions and decisions of that structure their lives. The narrative suggests that social order is not just transmitted, but it is experienced and explored. The system is played out in a narrative, in interaction with personal experiences and practices; notions of the system reappear through the lives and strategies of individuals. As such, the method explores the intertwining of the system and the lifeworld (Habermas 1998), thus exploring interaction and communication between social structures and the subjectivity of the individual agency (cf. Mitchell 1980).

Narration as it is proposed here can be conceptualized as offering room to accommodate all three analytical idioms proposed by Brubaker and Cooper. Given that, let me stress that I'm not simply advocating the changing of identity into a narrative. This would not solve any "identitary" dilemma. The narrative, or, "the narrative of belonging", I propose, might be used both as complementary to other

expressed concepts (such as those of Brubaker and Cooper or of Anthias) or as a substitute to them, since the concept is vast enough to offer various concretizations, but I particularly advocate its use in migration studies. For the purpose of understanding migrants' belonging in a transnational world, I thus propose to substitute the notions of migrants' hybrid identities with the conceptualizations of migrants' affinities, experiences of commonality and division, and their belonging through *narration*.

SITUATED BELONGING OF MIGRANTS FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Here I explore empirically migrants' narratives of belonging as they appear in the narratives. The narrations that are discussed below with the purpose to provide grounds for the proposition to use the concept of narrative in studying migrants' belonging are taken from biographical narrative interviews that were conducted in 2006–2010 with migrants who have come to Slovenia since 2000 from the former Yugoslav states. These demonstrate how migrants negotiate various identifications that stem from the narratives, including referencing their ethnic belonging, gender, sexual orientation etc. All of these accounts are expressed in a context, so the story is not suspended in time and space. To the contrary, using narration enables us to analyse migrants' belonging while considering the peculiarities of time and space.

In the excerpt below we can see how irritated Ada[5] was by a proposal to change her surname to disguise its Bosnian origins. We can clearly see in her narrative her readiness to fight racism and her determination not to disguise herself, but rather stress her particular ethnic belonging. She felt offended, vowing never to do such a thing:

> So at the Employment Service they also told me, because I went there I don't know how many times […] I mean, I'm glad if I get any answer. And I realized why. And then she said: "Why doesn't anyone take you?" I'd like to know it, too. Because nobody tells you, like, "you were not selected." I understand this too. She said: "But why, how?" She said: "You know what! Why don't you change your family name? You'll never get a job with a family name like this!" […] So I said, "No, I won't" […]. And even if I did. If my family name was, I don't know, some Slovenian family name, they'd know from my accent, so there's no point. I would be lying to myself, not others. (Ada)

Her reaction is similar when she speaks to her daughter about the school environment where Ada often fights against discrimination. When the daughter, doing her homework, asks Ada what she likes to eat, Ada responds by purposely stressing her liking for a typically Bosnian dish:

> Ana [the daughter] was very excited: "Mom, mom, I need to speak about you for two minutes [for homework]!" I said: "Go on." "What do you like to eat most?" I said, burečki. Burečki, do you know what it is? A kind of burek [filled pastry, a typical Bosnian dish], with meat filling, prepared a bit differently, you pour yogurt over it and then garlic. […] And it's wholly Bosnian. Nowhere else except in Bosnia. "I can't tell them that!" "Then you can say that I most like to eat blood sausages with sauerkraut." [a typical Slovenian dish] And she said: "But you don't eat that." […] Or, for example, if we go somewhere, she always sends a postcard, like, to her schoolmates, a teacher, from Rimini, from Paris, but never from Sarajevo, to anyone. "Ana, let's buy a postcard!" "Oh, well, don't feel like it." (Ada)

We can see from the narrative how specific contexts shape Ada's positioning. When being offended in Slovenia, she would stress her Bosnian belonging. On another occasion, when she explains how she was

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5 The names have been changed to hide the interviewees' identities.

told by her fellow Bosnians that her child only needs to speak good Bosnian, and that Slovene is not important, she explains how such situations make her say that she would never go back to Bosnia again. "And if I go down there [to Bosnia] I'm always in disputes and then I say: 'I'll never come back again!' And of course, I can't wait to return." These situations make Ada narrate her "in-between" feelings (for a conceptualization of such narrations see Milharčič Hladnik 2007; Cukut Krilić and Mlekuž 2009):

> So, it's slightly, I mean, this feeling, you don't feel at home here, because it's not it and you'll never feel at home. Down there you also don't feel at home, because for them you're a Slovene, and for them here you're a Bosnian. So you aren't at home anywhere. (Ada)

When her daughter speaks about being a Slovene, she says:

> Ana said that she was Slovene. I said: "Ana, you aren't a real Slovene. Your mother is Bosnian, your father is Bosnian, your surname ends in –ić, born to Bosnian parents, and you are probably Bosnian too." "No, I was born in Ljubljana, I'm Slovene." I said: "Darling, you are and you are not. You're somewhere in between. You are neither one nor the other." And this bothers her a lot. She is in search of herself. (Ada)

What could be coined "survival strategies" clearly emerges from narratives when interviewees express their distancing from a particular identity that they couch in ethnic terms based on their real-life situations (for the heterogeneity of ethnic identities see Lukšič Hacin 1999). Being faced with discrimination in the process of searching for work, Ada tends to reinforce her Bosnian belonging, while on other occasions she would clearly distance herself from her place of birth. The "in-between" narrations, which in some interviews tend to have an ethnic context and in others are associated with family or work contexts, have, in Ada's narration, a positive connotation when she is expressing "what and how" she *is*. Alternatively, similar narrations might be expressed by a story about "what and how" one is *not*, like in the case of Rudina.

> You know how I feel now, I'm no one here and no one there, because coming here changed me a lot. I'm not at all the person that I used to be, even one percent, I changed my thinking, I changed everything, I am not the person that I used to be there, even though I said I was not 100% in that culture, but now? I am not at all, but still I can't say that I'm 100% Slovenian, I belong here but, but I don't like 100% belong here. When I'm here I don't feel I'm at home in one way, but when I go there I don't feel at home either. It's very bad, because now I don't know where I am from, where I belong. You know, when I go there it's about two, three weeks and I have a problem that I can't stay with my friends there, because they are just talking about things, not that I couldn't stand, but I just felt that they are wasting time […], but here is one thing, it's too much business oriented, not just at the business school [Rudina is enrolled in a business school], but all the people talk about and do is business, how to get money. There they are more family oriented. So that's why I'm telling you that I don't know where I belong, because I could never live without my parents, of course I couldn't live without them, but for example talking with them, we talk every day, maybe twice or three times a day and I still can't understand people that do not talk for a week, or once a week. I just don't make any decisions without talking with them, so I still have that connection with my parents. But one the other hand I cannot be only like family oriented, a woman that works at home, even now things have changed and women are working there, but still when they go home they are closed, they are family. I am pro-work and pro-family but still you have to have some time for your own, which I miss there, or here I miss the family, so in that way I'm still kind of in the middle. (Rudina)

Rudina's narrative shows how she negotiates her belonging through her current and past experiences. She has come to Slovenia for her business studies and she relates her belonging to her studies, saying that her life is not "only about business and making money" but also about "friends and family". Being confined to her business-school environment in Slovenia, her narration about Slovenia being all

about business is clearly an expression of her particular school-related experience (the issue of context is clearly important here). She ascribes values of friendship and family to her encounters in Kosovo and explains how both work and family are of equal importance to her. Her words are a clear example of how she negotiates her experiences and values that she perceives as "being in the middle" (ibid.).

In general, her story expresses positive aspects of being able to share different cultural worlds. Still, her "in-between" positioning is not just fun for her. Her account also tells us that she has the problem of not belonging anywhere "100 percent", which seems to cause stress for her. Discomfort is a result of the inability to fit "100%" into either cultural environment. "It's very bad, because now I don't know where I am from, where I belong…"

Constantly negotiating her belonging, Melanija has a strong positioning of home that for her is strongly associated with her past life:

> Once you leave your home and your birthplace, where your roots are, behind, it doesn't matter if you're in Vojvodina, Slovenia, Italy, England or America. You don't feel at home anymore. We like it here because we used to visit my husband in the summer and the children are, like, delighted with Slovenia. I think that many things are in better shape, many, many things. You know what? In Croatia we had a good life, when we came to Vojvodina we were, like, picked on, refugees and so on, like "Where do you come from?" and "Who are you?" and "Why are you here?" I don't know, perhaps other people's experiences are different, [but] this is how I felt. (Melanija)

Rudina's experience of Slovenia being all about business is also related to her sense of loneliness after she first arrived for her studies. Her story is about feeling detached from Slovenes who seemed much better off, and she chooses to socialize at first with Romanians:

> When I came in Slovenia, the first week, actually it was an introductory week, so we were not doing much. I was the only one from Kosovo, there were two from Romania and the others were from Slovenia, and the Slovenians were staying together, the Romanians were staying together, so I was like feeling that I'm not part of this place. I mean for that one week, I was not accepted, of course, I mean it's like that everywhere, they knew each other. And then I started to hang around with the Romanians. When the lectures started the Slovenians were much better in English, they had had a lot of experiences and they had travelled all around the world, for me coming to Slovenia was the first, not the first, I was in Turkey for a holiday, but I came here all on my own, because my father wanted me to become independent, to go on my own and find my way around. And I felt really alone all the time, really. And then I started to hang around with Romanians, and as I said, the Slovenians had travelled, they had had experiences, [and] I was just feeling like I'm not part of this world, I should go back. (Rudina)

Capturing Slovenia and the Slovenes in the framework of business changes when Rudina's narrative switches to her "fitting in" to the new environment. When she mentions that her best friend is Slovenian she denounces viewpoints that the Slovenes are cold and all just about business, adding that this was her impression *as a student at the business school* which doesn't apply in general. Here we can see a very located sense of the expressed belonging where the identification is about specific social locations that are embedded in particular environments.

In narrating their stories, the interviewees stress both positive and negative attitudes towards their belonging, demonstrating in this way both their difference from and closeness to the environment in question.

A moment of distancing is either related to culture or specifically to a lack of opportunities to study and work. In expressions of cultural difference we can sense in Rudina's story, in contrast to, for example, Ada's story, her wish to hide from "Albanian culture", where she at the one hand identifies herself as Albanian and at the same time distances herself from being "a real" Albanian – here she seems to internalize the imposed categorization over what being an Albanian means. The second part of the narrative shows distancing as a result of lack of opportunities:

[…] but I didn't want to be the same as them, I wanted to be different, I don't know, I don't have that Albanian culture, I'm Albanian but I'm not like real Albanians are. Maybe because my parents had travelled a lot and took positive things from that, we are kind of different, not different, but kind of more social, and when I had a chance to come to Slovenia, […] my father works with Slovenians a lot and my mother had breast cancer and she had surgery in Slovenia, so they have a different attitude towards the Slovenians.

[…] if I'm there, I'm going to be there forever, and that was not what I wanted. I wanted to go somewhere and study, of course I'm not planning to just forget about Kosovo, of course helping there, working as well for there, but the main reason that I'm here to help there is, because from there it's hard to help there, because you have no opportunity, there are not many opportunities, it's just, how can I say, you just become one of them and I never wanted to be one of them. Not because they are bad at all, just you don't have any opportunities. (Rudina).

Ana felt secluded in her home environment in Croatia and reflects on how she has always felt that she doesn't belong there. Being a woman, a foreigner and a lesbian in Slovenia, she expresses how she is currently better off in Slovenia. Her both positive and negative experiences are expressed through her located feelings about specific cultural environments. Reflecting on her narration we can see how rich her accounts are and how they're more meaningful than a positive statement of identity would be. Also, Ana's lesbian identification that is addressed in the first fragment below is much more than a simple positive statement, and she clearly expresses that her social relations are not limited to simple identitary labelling. Again, it is the context that helps us understand her critical reflection on outside identification that reduces personalities to one-dimensional claims which is a reality that she clearly rejects. The second part of her story reflects Ana's strong feelings about closed borders where general statements on peoples' movement are intertwined with her personal need to leave Croatia.

I don't socialize, I don't socialize with people because of their sexual orientation, ethnicity or anything like that, I'm not interested in it at all anymore. I was interested when I was twenty, going to a lesbian club. I was interested. But now I'd never go again to a lesbian club. Because there, a generation of women who have the same problems as I had when I was twenty comes there. They need women's support, lesbians like themselves, so they need to… socialize there a bit, dance, and meet people and fall in love and all that. And once you go through it, I mean, I think there is no need, like, to keep yourself arrested in one position, remain there all your life and become entangled and unable to escape, like that. Be a lesbian, a foreigner, be this or that. So it's how it was […] but what I think is very important is that these possibilities do exist. Because people need it. That's why I've again mentioned Metelkova, it played such an important role at a certain point in my life. In that way, too. Now I don't need it anymore, but I support it. Because I know how important it was for me, you know. And how important it is now for some other people, you know, who are in a similar situation, like that. (Ana)

It is terrible if you are hemmed in by these borders, states, so you cannot go anywhere else, and not because they'd not let you go, but because you're from this fucking country. It is a really, really terrible feeling. […] I mean, yes, I knew, one thing I knew when I was growing up, that is that I didn't want to grow up in, didn't want to live in Dalmatia. I was sure about it. So even then, when I was 19, I wanted to leave, you know. I don't know, it's not important where. It was Zagreb, but I think that in a way I wanted to stay away from that, from that Dalmatian distress. I mean, I didn't like it. Of course I like all that, I mean, the region as such, it's really beautiful and I adore the sea, but that strange patriarchal Christian atmosphere always, always oppressed me in a way. I didn't feel good. And I lived in what you could call the survival mode. So I didn't speak much because I knew that if I told something about myself, some truth about myself, that it wouldn't be good for me. So I always had to, like, I always had to make decisions, compromises, to be able to survive. And, I don't know, perhaps it was one of the reasons for coming here. I feel better here. Even though I had bad experiences and difficulties getting those papers. But I finally feel that I no longer, that I don't have that obligation any more to justify my moves and my life. (Ana)

Ivana, who left Croatia with her family for Slovenia fleeing the war, tends to deal with her discomfort by reasoning that a person is still a person regardless of any attributions of identity. Her war-related experiences are much more meaningful than any attributions of identity and they also are specifically bounded by time and space. Ivana seems to deal with her experiences of war by shifting attention from difference to "human sameness", which might be considered her "survival strategy".

> For me, nationalism, or religion, or skin colour, nothing has influence on us and we don't want it, and with such people you simply want to show them that it's not important. If you can speak with them at all, with some there is no chance of speaking about it. And naturally, the war was just another experience [demonstrating] that nationalism, ethnicity, or other, is unimportant. Because that war in Croatia, when it happened, it was, I don't know why it happened. People still LIVE. Croats and Serbs, who were the greatest enemies, in the SAME villages where they lived until now – only many Serbs went away – they AGAIN live together. And I don't understand WHY the war broke out. I cannot understand that.

> If you are a refugee, but you're a human, like them. And like that. Like that, yes, many things. I think many people are good and I want to absorb only positive things from others, and I want to give only good things to others. Now, what others think about us, I don't know that. I say that many people are really good. Really many people are good. […] For me, money is not a value, for me the value is in a human being […] I say, all that's needed is a healthy attitude of one person towards another. To some degree, it doesn't need to be much. Only a healthy attitude of one person towards another. That someone understands you, that they're okay. (Ivana)

Many stories of migrants in Slovenia have a strong labour-market related component that shows how they are continuously dismissed as a replaceable workforce that is only needed in terms of economic profits, and that should disappear when profits are no longer high enough.[6] Migrants performing 3D jobs talk about working long hours, having low salaries or not receiving any. The narratives also express the fear experienced by migrant workers when their employers threaten to reduce their salaries or withhold them entirely. For migrants, the constraint imposed by their immigrant status is a significant burden, whether their status is that of a contractual worker or seasonal worker, whose short-term duration and correspondingly limited residence permit put them in an even more precarious position. Deprived of any other alternatives, since their work contracts tie them to one specific employer, who is usually also the one who arranged their work permit, the migrant workers need to endure harsh working conditions in order not to risk losing their job and consequently their work permits. Most of our interview partners were tied to short-term work contracts, which further exacerbates hardships in employment relations, and nearly all have had some experience with undocumented work. They mention work accidents, experiences with bad attitudes on the part of their bosses or co-workers, unfair treatment, poor living conditions and a lack of social contacts. Many faced insurmountable obstacles when trying to arrange their legal and administrative affairs, which often caused anxiety for them. Not earning much and being under stress to earn enough money to send home, many migrants eat poorly and reside in unsuitable housing that does not allow them to have a decent rest. When combined with hard physical labour and long working hours, this results in health problems which only accumulate due to the lack of heath care options.

Analyses of the interviews show that the migrants' precarious labour market positions strongly determine their narratives. When interpreting the accounts of belonging of migrants who endure harsh living and working conditions, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that some of the migrants could hardly survive through the month. The interviews point to the fact that these precarious positions need to be considered as a strong context in which the narrations occur. In particular, the migrants' bad economic position, resulting in some cases in a total absence of any kind of social life or contacts outside

6 Particularly interviews conducted within the Primts project.

work, reminds us that narratives cannot be understood fully if context is ignored. Also, there were cases where by far the largest part of the interview was devoted to reflecting on work-related experiences.

> And when we came, all of it, he registered us, the same day, everything we needed, just like that. But I saw that it was not what he promised to us, he didn't have a company or, we didn't have a clue. And there was this apartment, it was a sort of, like, primitive, it wasn't an apartment at all. But ok, we can [endure it] for some time, to see what's going on. "No work today, no work tomorrow, there'll be some tomorrow, there'll be some today" and so on for three days. I could see things were not getting anywhere, and on the fourth day he said he had work for us, but in fact he had a company that rented out workers. And then you have to work five days for one company, and then for another, and then… you know. And the money he promised to us, that we will have, nothing like that, nothing close to it. (Tomislav)

> At my job I do the dirtiest part of the work, I wash dishes. I make salads, sweets, and I do all of that in the same day […]. But I work three, three jobs in 8 hours, and this boss is not thankful for that. […] When everybody goes to party, I work, I mean, I am, I have no time for myself, I have no time for a friend, I cannot go out because I don't have weekends. I work 8 hours, and after 8 hours I always stay another hour, you know, and all that… (Tamara)

> Say, a business owner earns 10 euros per an ordinary worker and pays him 2.5 euros, and when you calculate all that it's, er, for nothing. And the average salary in Slovenia is 500, 520 euros, but how to live on that… I cannot understand it. I have a wife and two children, and my salary is around 550 euros. I have an apartment here, I pay 100 euros for it, I need 250 euros for food, how then can I feed my wife and children. It's not that I complain about Slovenia, but I know that it can be better. As I said, I worked in Slovenia before, before the war, in 87, 88, I worked for the railways and at that time I earned much more, and it was much better. (Fikret)

Family is the most pronounced common feature of belonging in all interviews and it is more pronounced when the families are far away. Here, the accounts of longing to be reunited with a girlfriend, children or parents are strong. A strong wish to be reunited with a family member is in some cases accompanied by a narration about the economic situation that prevents families from living together. Conditions at work often prevent our interviewees from visiting their relatives in Bosnia, Croatia or Serbia, which causes additional distress.

> Well, I'd like […] to stay here and to have my girlfriend here. My girlfriend to be here. But this is a bit more difficult. You have to try hard for it. So we'll see. I mean, nothing binds me to Serbia. Nothing binds me to Serbia. Only, only the apartment. But here too I can arrange it, see. I could rent it out and it'd be even better for me […] Well, the plans are, I don't know what the plans are. Either to stay here, if I get an opportunity here, or to return to Belgrade. I have no other plans, see. Perhaps I could stay here, and in a few years bring my girlfriend here, when she completes her studies, at least here she could find something, some job. (Marko)

> As far as life in Slovenia, one could live here and I came to Slovenia for work. I had a wish, I'm married, I have two children, I wanted to bring my wife and my children to Slovenia. It's difficult to obtain those papers, for them to come here. As far as papers and all that it could be worked out somehow, but you cannot support them, you know, I couldn't support my wife and two children with my salary. So I cannot bring them to Slovenia. I wouldn't like to bring them like this, because I cannot support them, so it's better if they are not here. […] And it's not, I mean, I'm not fulfilled, I mean, I'm not satisfied. I'm not satisfied with my salary. I'm not. And I'm not satisfied because I live apart from my family. I'd like to be with my wife, with my children, but I'm not. (Fikret)

> I came here, I got a tourist visa, to come, my husband was here; he came in May, so we were not used to it that one is here and one there, or to being separated […] we were always together, so it was difficult for us, so I came here on a visit, and I was here two weeks, then we looked to see if there is any work, if I could find some job. […]

Now it's difficult for me, because the children are not here, but I hope it will work. The children, coming here, I enrolled them in school, the international school, because they said that's okay, that all foreigners are there. Foreigners, nobody said this to me before, that I was a foreigner, but it's how they talk, so... I learnt to speak Slovenian a bit, they say I try hard and I am learning. I've been here for six months so every month I go there, to Macedonia for one week, and then back. So it's all very difficult, but when you have a goal, you have to succeed, you have to […] And children, whoever can bring children, it's not good for children to live alone at this time, so it's not really the best of the best... I hope that the children will be here and that everything will be alright and all that. It's our goal, to be here. If the children don't come, I'll go there, the victims are me and my husband, and the children, but if they don't come here I'll go back. No matter how it is there I must go back. That's it. It's not Macedonia, it's Slovenia, the family and the children, what is most [important]. (Filipa)

CONCLUSIONS

The article considers the notion of identity, particularly the conceptualizations of hybrid and shifting identities that are believed to do a good job of describing the multifarious types of belonging of contemporary subjects and their ties to various social, cultural and political contexts. The critical appraisal of postmodernist interpretations of identity used in some research on transnationalism and migration regimes (cf. Ong 1999; Levitt 2001) as well as in policymaking (i.e. current debates on integration, cf. Kontos 2011), I argue, does not apply well to the situation of migrant populations. The notion of hybrid identity is too loose to reflect the contextualized and often highly situated life experiences of migrants (Anthias 2002).

The empirical evidence presented in this article points to the complex interrelationships that shape migrant belonging in the post-Yugoslav context. I have explored alternative conceptualizations and have argued that these, in particular the notion of narrative, are analytically more appropriate to capture migrants' belonging (see Milharčič Hladnik 2007 for the Slovenian context). In contrast to a positive notion of hybridity and of hybrid identities that are supposed to allow us to adjust to any circumstances and choose our identities freely as we feel best fits our ideas, the migrants' narratives reveal how belonging is not free-floating and waiting for us to choose and adjust, but how it is shaped by very specific circumstances that determine the lives of migrants (Pajnik and Campani 2011). Experiences of war, leaving the country of birth to study, fleeing for economic reasons to be able to sustain the family, leaving a strict environment that doesn't allow the expression of difference – all these are very specific circumstances that need to be considered when analysing migrant transnationalism and transnational belonging. Precisely because the contexts are so particular, general identity labels used to describe migrants' experiences can't fully assess the complexity of their realities.

Let me stress once again that this article is not a plea for abandoning the concept of identity. To the contrary, the argument aims at contributing to the debates about the usefulness of identity in explaining the complex interrelationships of migrating individuals; it should help us understand the concept better and encourage us to elaborate on its particular applications. Too often, identity is simply assumed. Consequently we have witnessed the naturalization of the concept, with its side effect being the decline in endeavours to grasp the concept analytically. The migrants' storytelling presented in this article is as much a story about identity as it is a story against it. I have used the concept of narrative and of storytelling to explore migrants' belonging but, perhaps most importantly, identification in all its complexity was made by the actors themselves.

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POVZETEK

NARACIJE O PRIPADANJU V POSTJUGOSLOVANSKEM KONTEKSTU
Mojca PAJNIK

Članek prevprašuje veljavnost pojma multiplih ali hibridnih identitet, pri čemer je v ospredju argumentacija, da takšna raba v nekaterih študijah transnacionalizma in migracijskih režimov lahko poustvarja migrante kot druge in drugačne. Česar ta raba ne izpostavi, je, da pripadanja niso nekaj abstraknega, ampak so situirane in kontekstualizirane izkušnje, medtem ko stavljenje na »pozitivne« identitete lahko učinkuje kot maskiranje strukturnih neenakosti. Besedilo se posveča alternativnim konceptualizacijam z uporabo naracije in pripovedovanja zgodb, ki bolje kot identitete zaobjamejo kontekstualizirane realnosti migracij. Teoretska argumentacija je podkrepljena z rezultati empirične raziskave, kjer je v ospredju razprava o pripadanju v post-jugoslovanskem kontekstu na podlagi biografskih intervjujev z migranti v Sloveniji. Besedilo je kritično do uporabe pojma hibridne identitite v nekaterih študijah migracij in na področju politik, kjer konstruktivistične, poststrukturalistične in postmoderne konceptualizacije hibridnosti lahko implicirajo, da so migranti samoodgovorni za integracijo. Besedilo razpravlja o identiteti teoretično in empirično na podlagi naracij migrantov.