

## INTRODUCTION: TALKING PAST EACH OTHER AND OTHER CATCH-22 SITUATIONS: STATES, EMIGRATION, AND “DIASPORAS”

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Neither migrants nor minorities always behave the way their governments want them to. This reality is a lesson that Yugoslavia, in both its embodiments, frequently made—amplified by the fact that both the interwar kingdom and the post-war communist regime pursued ambitious nation-building projects. These projects addressed not only the domestic population but also emigrants coming from its territory. In a region where minority issues and migration intersected in complex ways, such projects could go only wrong, one might have predicted. And they often did when policymakers and local bureaucrats struggled with inherently contradictory agendas.

Such was the experience of the captain of the district of Bitola in Southern Serbia, today North Macedonia, in 1925 (Brunnbauer, 2016: 238–239). He was caught between the government’s official and hidden agendas and their implication on the question of who was allowed to leave and who was not. As is well known, officially, there was neither a Bulgarian nor a Macedonian population in “Southern Serbia”—the Slavs there were considered Serbs after Serbia had occupied Vardar Macedonia in the Balkan Wars. So, they belonged to the titular nation of the tri-unite kingdom, which also meant that they should be discouraged from emigration: interwar Yugoslavia pursued an ethnically differentiated emigration policy. “A-national elements,” that is, members of the large non-Slavic minorities such as Hungarians, Albanians, Turks, and Germans, should be encouraged to leave. At the same time, “national” families should be denied permission to emigrate. This policy was unofficial because the Law on Emigration, passed in 1921, did not include any ethnically discriminating language. But the government commanded local authorities, who issued passports, to not hand out passports to “national elements” of whom they assumed they might emigrate. The government even tried to prevent the return of citizens who belonged to one of the large “a-national” minorities. In the distribution of the few immigrant US visas allocated to Yugoslavia, a clear preponderance of regions with large minority populations is evident.

At the same time, local authorities in Macedonia continued to issue emigration passports to local Slavs until the bold decision to stop this by the district captain

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in Bitola. Why would Macedonians be allowed to leave, although they should be banned from emigration as an official part of the titular nation? Why did the unofficial minority policies thwart the unofficial emigration policies? The local authorities in Macedonia were aware that many local Slavs did not identify as Serbs, their official nationality. They either supported Bulgarian irredentism—brought into the province by the IMRO organization that operated from safe havens in south-western Bulgaria—or felt a separate Macedonian consciousness. For this reason, behind closed doors, the authorities considered them “a-national” elements whose emigration should be facilitated. Upon consultation from lower-level authorities, the Ministry of Social Policy, which handled emigration matters in interwar Yugoslavia, declared that “regarding the emigration of national minorities, the Ministry shares the view that their emigration must be favored”—hence acknowledging that there was a Bulgarian or Macedonian minority in “Southern Serbia” that created problems (Brunnbauer, 2016: 239).

Until the district captain decided otherwise in 1925 and stopped issuing passports, thereby causing frustration in the government, he argued that locals used passports to travel to Bulgaria, where they received Bulgarian passports allowing them to migrate overseas. Many of them would join pro-Bulgarian and anti-Yugoslav organizations in North America and Australia, where concentrations of immigrants from Macedonia had existed since the beginning of the twentieth century. These groups promoted the separation of the Serb-controlled part of Macedonia from Yugoslavia and its transfer to Bulgaria. They also supported the terrorist IMRO organization that killed government officials in Macedonia. Successive Bulgarian governments supported these pro-Bulgarian emigrant organizations. The Yugoslav General Consul in Chicago confirmed that in 1925, writing that many of the immigrants from “Southern Serbia” were successfully recruited by the anti-Yugoslav “Macedonian Political Organization” (MPO) in the United States. They were lost to “our propaganda” because they “are forced to find jobs here with the help of their compatriots who had settled earlier and thus maintain bonds with the *Bugaraši* [Bulgarophiles]. They join their organizations. This is made even easier by the fact that the local Serb colony has completely different customs and a different mentality than our Macedonians” (Archive of Yugoslavia, n. d.).

As a matter of fact, the MPO, established in Indiana in 1922, was quite a formidable organization, maintaining an interest in the Macedonian “struggle” and distributing Bulgarian propaganda among many immigrants from Macedonia. Their conventions attracted thousands of participants. To prevent immigrants from Yugoslav Macedonia from joining the MPO, Yugoslavia’s Consul General to Chicago suggested halting Macedonian emigration. The Ministry for Social Policy responded by reiterating its preference for facilitating minority emigration, thus acknowledging the existence of a Bulgarian minority in Macedonia. The Ministry wrote that it was well known that members of the Bulgarian and Hungarian minorities supported irredentist causes and, therefore, preferred for them to leave for good. However, the Ministry was

also aware that many emigrants would continue their anti-Yugoslav propaganda abroad. Therefore, it requested other ministries to opine on the question “whether these elements are more dangerous within the borders of the state or abroad, i.e., whether their emigration should be favored or obstructed” (quoted in Brunnbauer, 2016: 238). The government, thus, became aware that its repressive minority policies and the facilitation of minority emigration actually contributed to the creation of a disloyal and anti-Yugoslav counter-diaspora. The question for them now was, where did these people cause less trouble: at home, where the police could observe and repress them, or on the other side of the Atlantic, far away, yet also out of the state’s sovereign purview.

The articles of this special issue of *Dve Domovini / Two Homelands* look at the policies of governments in Central and Southeastern Europe in the early twentieth century toward emigrants and, on the reverse side of this relationship, the attitudes of emigrants toward their “home country.” These explorations contribute new knowledge not only to the complex migration history of the region but also to our understanding of the politics of belonging in a time of intensified nation and state-building. In the introduction to their seminal volume on the connection between citizenship and the politics of emigration, Nancy Green and François Weil contend that “Defining emigrants was thus part of a larger process of defining citizens (and their obligations), national character, as well as the notion of a cultural nation” (Green & Weil, 2007: 3). Our special issue builds on this insight and positions “diaspora” and governments’ outreach toward emigrants firmly in the politics of belonging and national identification. It also makes a case for the special interest of Central and Southeastern Europe in the twentieth century for a discussion of these issues: it is here where persistent emigration of different kinds intersected with particularly dynamic and contradictory nation-building processes. These are not the result of any innate proclivity of Central and Southeastern European societies toward nationalism but of the frequency of border changes and the difficulty to carve out national spaces in an ethnically heterogeneous region, where embordering almost naturally became a vexed and contested matter.

These complexities are also evident in the politics of emigration, as our special issue aims to show. In this region, transnationalism is very much a product of the transterritorial nature of spaces of national belonging, and vice versa: the transterritorial nature of nations stimulated transnational practices “from the top” and “from below.” The ideal-typical case is Greece and the Hellenic nation, where “the transterritorial conception of the national subject was a constitutive element of modern Greek nationalism from the moment of its genesis and thereafter” (Laliotou, 2004: 54). But to different degrees, these entanglements are evident in most other nation-building projects in the region. Our special issue has, thus, two main objectives. *First*, it showcases the importance of Central and Southeastern Europe as a laboratory of modern emigration and diaspora politics, as they have emerged since the late nineteenth century. The concern for “diasporas,” evident today in dedicated

ministries and state agencies, is nothing new in this region. Like Nancy Foner (2000), we provide further evidence for the continuity of transnational connections and especially highlight the state's role for them. *Second*, the contributions evince the heuristic productivity of out-migration for elucidating concepts and techniques of nation and state-building. The amount of political attention and capital spent by modern states on attempts to control and regulate migration indicates that migration obviously touches some of the fundamental tenets of modern statehood. Migration threatens to dissolve what Charles Maier has described as the congruence between "decision" and "identity spaces," to which modern states aspire (Maier, 2000). They do undertake measures to remedy this problem. Hence, the study of migration—even if it might not seem so important from a purely quantitative point of view—tells us a lot about the modern state and its politics of sovereignty.

Conceptually, the special issue builds on Rogers Brubaker's urge to not take groups and collective identities for granted but consider them as projects manifest in concrete practices. Diasporas often were, and still are, characterized in essentialist terms—especially by those who make claims toward or in the name of the "diaspora." Nationalists come up with grossly inflated numbers of their "diasporas," counting any offspring of the original emigrants as their members, regardless of how many generations they might be detached or how they identify themselves. Brubaker, in contrast, thinks of diaspora

In the first instance as a category of practice, and only then ask[s] whether, and how, it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis. As a category of practice, "diaspora" is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties. It is often a category with a strong normative charge. It does not so much describe the world as seek to remake it (Brubaker, 2005: 12).

The articles of this special issue showcase that diasporas indeed are neither fixed nor bounded entities but "stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices" (Brubaker, 2005: 12). This does not mean that they are not real: as this special issue shows, we can explore how, why, and by whom diasporas are constructed, how states and other home-grown actors attribute identities on those who have left, how emigrants form groups that pursue home-oriented projects. The articles also highlight the shifting boundaries of identity spaces, the floating nature of emigrant identifications, and the contingent character of diasporic belongings. Dramatic events in the home country, such as war or natural disaster, might stimulate temporary diasporas which do not survive long beyond the triggering event. Diaspora, thus, is not only a project but also a process: diasporic identities thin out. If not predicated upon institutions, they may fade away, as most emigrants have other day-to-day concerns than to spend their time thinking about identity and formulating projects that address issues in far-away places. For this reason, state policies are important for the stability of diaspora identities, either because the home state provides support for its emigrants or

because the host state wants to use immigrants for its foreign policies toward their native country and provides institutional support.

The second body of research upon which this special issue builds explores the politics of belonging in connection with mass emigration. It appears that those European countries where massive overseas emigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with intense nation-building were particularly likely to engage in diaspora-building efforts. The paradigmatic case is Italy, where the government soon after unification started with attempts to control emigrants and bind them to the new nation-state. Mark Choate and Donna Gabaccia have impressively analyzed the Italian national state's motivations, strategies, and measures to convert the millions of Italian emigrants into a loyal diaspora. They were expected to feel continuous affiliation for Italy, rally for its support, send money, and, if the times dictated, heed to its call for war. Italy, thus, became an "emigrant nation" (Choate, 2008: 2; cf. Gabaccia, 2000). Italy pioneered a range of techniques to maintain the emigrants' loyalty and foster their return. The first Law on Emigration was passed already in 1888. In 1901, the government set up the General Emigration Commission, and in 1908, the Italian Colonial Institute helped organize the first congress of the *italiani all'estero*. These measures were discursively framed in terms of the "global" Italian nation and rooted in the sense of a unifying civilization that allowed one to remain Italian wherever one lived (very similar to the Greek concept of a transnational Hellenic nation—see Laliotou, 2004). These policies had real-life consequences—for example, the continued right to vote in Italian elections even while being a citizen of a different country or the liberal extension of citizenship to the offspring of emigrants. Yet, as Donna Gabaccia's work makes clear, official concepts of diaspora identity ("Italians abroad") and the self-perceptions of such addressed people could be notably different, as emigrants professed regional, local, or other forms of sub-national identity (Gabaccia, 2000) if other ambitious diaspora makers had only learned from that lesson.

Similar policies were observed by the Kingdom of Hungary, whose emigration experts studied the Italian model, or by interwar Poland. On the example of Slovak emigrants in the United States, Monika Glettler (1980) has analyzed the policies of the government of the Kingdom of Hungary to facilitate minority emigration, to prevent minority organizations abroad to support their discriminated brethren in Hungary, and to maintain the loyalty of Magyar emigrants in America. Interwar Poland tried to steer emigration toward countries where the government hoped Polish emigrants would maintain their national identity because the host society was considered to have less civilization and thus less assimilatory appeal. This attitude pertained especially to Latin American countries. The government of the second Polish Republic and more than 20 non-governmental associations carried out activities to bind the trans-Atlantic *Polonia* to the new state. In 1929, the first congress of Poles abroad took place, which resulted in the establishment of the "Organizational Council of the Poles Abroad" (*Rada Organizacyjna Polaków z Zagranicy*). The Polish

case also highlights the ethnic discrimination often built into these activities. The diaspora outreach was targeted exclusively toward ethnic Poles. At the same time, the government in 1936 developed a plan to assist the departure of ethnic minorities (especially Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews) from Poland (Gabaccia et al., 2007: 78–80). Interwar Yugoslavia, thus, was in good company. What was at stake here is summarized by Donna Gabaccia, Dirk Hoerder, and Adam Walaszek in their comparative explorations of German, Italian, and Polish attitudes toward the “diaspora”:

Discussions of how emigrants spread Polish, Italian, and German influence internationally also revealed a transition that we might characterize as a shift from predominantly cultural or romantic to increasingly racial or biological understandings of the three nations. [...] States saw them as potential “transmission belts” to encourage support for the changing foreign policies of the homeland (Gabaccia et al., 2007: 81).

Hence, while more often than not diaspora builders faced disappointing results as emigrants would neither behave nor identify in the ways they had designed for them, these pursuits were relevant beyond their immediate result or failure: they helped to solidify ethnic definitions of national belonging, centered on “culture,” descent, or even “blood.” At around 1900, in places like Hungary and Croatia, or among Polish national activists, the triumph of the ethnic definition of the nation and of citizenship had not yet been a forgone conclusion. Influential intellectuals and political groups still articulated more inclusive, political concepts of the nation, which would have allowed the integration of diverse linguistic or even confessional groups. However, the emigration experience and the identity policies toward emigrants helped to shift the debate decisively toward the ethnic conceptualizations of nationhood, as shared culture seemed the only possible clamp powerful enough to bind dispersed populations to their “motherland.” So, it is not only debates about immigration but also about emigration that led to a narrowing of viable identity options, as belonging became increasingly ethnicized.

The contributions to this special issue make clear why these problems were particularly vexed in Central and Southeastern Europe. The authors highlight important intersections between empire and nationalism, between sending and host state, between majority and minority relations, between irredenta and emigration politics. At the points of all these intersections, contradictions and contestations appeared that changed the initial vector of state agendas. The emigrants’ own agendas often undermined policies to create loyal diasporas, and migrant communities were invariably shaped by the divisions of their native country, such as regional and religious attachments. Diaspora hopefuls also often faced the question of which kind of loyalty to prioritize—policymakers fretted, for example, of socialist leanings of their “emigrants,” even if they belonged to the right nationality. Thus, diaspora-building and emigrant self-organization were rarely

congruent, and policymakers and emigrants were sometimes forced into awkward compromises. For example, the emigration organizations called *Matica*, established in the Yugoslav republics in the 1950s, reached out to non- or even anti-communist emigrant organizations in the United States. The socialist Yugoslav authorities also cooperated with Catholic parishes abroad in caring for the needs and loyalties of the *Gastarbeiter* emigrants in the 1970s. Theodora Dragostinova (2021) has shown on the example of socialist Bulgaria's ambitious cultural diplomacy during the 1970s that—as long as a shared commitment to propagating Bulgaria's grandeur was maintained and overtly anti-regime rhetoric avoided—state officials learned to interact with anti-communist diaspora activists. Central and Southeastern Europe, thus, have not only a long but also a very colorful history of government engagement with emigrants.

Two contributions address diaspora policies and emigrant identifications in the context of the Habsburg Monarchy, which in the decades before World War I was one of the prime sending countries of emigrants to the United States. More than 3.5 million people left the Dual Monarchy since the 1870s, in roughly equal numbers from its two constitutive parts, Austria and Hungary. **Ursula Prutsch** follows two successful emigrants from Dalmatia, which was then the poorest part of Austria and at the same time a laboratory of contested nation-building projects. One of them, Nikolaus Mihanovich (born 1844), left Dalmatia in 1868 for Argentina, where he became the owner of the largest shipping company in Latin America, employing many fellow countrymen. He became a stalwart of loyalty toward Austria-Hungary, serving as honorary consul. In contrast to him, Pascual Barburizza (born in Dalmatia in 1875), who became a rich mining tycoon in Chile, supported the struggle of his Slavic countrymen against the “prison of nations” with massive financial donations. During World War I, the space for pro-Habsburg activities and sentiments notably narrowed, while South-Slavic emigrants in Latin America organized for the “liberation” and unification of their territories. Prutsch shows two things. Emigrants coming from a pluri-ethnic background, such as Austria in general and Dalmatia in particular, could identify in very different, hardly predictable ways. These diverging articulations of belonging reflected divisions in the native country. Yet, with a changing foreign policy context, immigrants had to redefine themselves, especially those who ran the risk of being identified with an enemy in war.

**Kristina Poznan** also focuses on emigrants from Austria-Hungary, but this time primarily those from the Hungarian “half.” She highlights the efforts of Austro-Hungarian diplomacy, faced with such a massive emigration, especially to the United States, to protect the emigrants and maintain their loyalty toward the monarchy. After all, they were supposed to come back. Emigrants were quite happy to accept the support of consuls for their day-to-day problems or being repatriated when they fell into destitution. Hungary's ambitions, though, were more far-reaching. The “American Action,” launched by the Prime Minister's Office in Budapest, aimed to link Magyar emigrants to the Kingdom of Hungary and its government more firmly.



Working through “loyal” clergy, subsidizing immigrant newspapers and organizations, and trying to isolate migrants from elements unfriendly toward the monarchy were among the arsenal of measures taken. At the same time, the Hungarian government tried to stifle separatism among Slavic immigrant organizations in the United States. The transnational state efforts at imperial loyalty sparked protests by Slavic immigrants from Hungary in America, most notably Slovaks, who protested when prominent representatives of the Hungarian regime visited the United States. In the context of a pluri-ethnic emigrant community from a pluri-ethnic country, several of the more narrowly ethno-nationalist diaspora-building efforts created a backlash even as other support services remained utilized.

The contribution by **Miha Zobec** offers a uniquely complex case of intersecting historical changes. By evaluating state-diaspora relations in the case of two distinct groups of Slovenian speakers, Zobec highlights the importance of historical legacies and the entanglement of minority and diaspora policies in the interwar period. Slovene-speaking emigrants from the Prekmurje region, which had been part of historical Hungary, were reluctant to embrace Yugoslavia, even though the Yugoslav authorities considered them part of the titular nation. Yet before 1918, when most of these emigrants had left, neither the Slovenian nor the Yugoslav national idea had gotten much traction in this rural, conservative corner of Hungary. In contrast to them, emigrants from the Julian March, which after 1918 was ruled by Italy and where the Slovenian population faced severe discrimination, were fond of the Yugoslav idea. It appears that in the first case, translocal (and less politicized) links based on family and local affiliations and amplified by Lutheran priests were more important than transnational ones. In contrast, emigrants from the Julian March could link their personal fate to a larger narrative, that is, the fight against fascism and for the liberation of Yugoslavia’s “unredeemed” territories. Analyzing immigrant press and material of the Yugoslav embassies, Zobec also shows that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia alienated even well-inclined emigrants.

Staying with emigrants from the territory of Yugoslavia in the United States, **Ethan Larson’s** piece forces us to question the salience of ethnicity for identifying with a diaspora. “Trans-ethnicity,” another concept coined by Rogers Brubaker, led to identifications with the Serb cause not predicated on descent but conviction. Larson presents five intriguing cases and their background: the reporter Ruth Mitchell, “a quintessential old-stock American” of Scottish ancestry, who even fought with the Chetniks in occupied Serbia; the Californian actress Eleanor Calhoun, who joined pro-Serbian circles during the Balkan Wars, when Serbian nationalists welcomed anyone in their “diaspora” as long as they supported their cause; the Pennsylvania born musician and singer Johann M. Blose, who after getting in touch with Serbs in Pittsburgh established a Serbian singing society in 1928; Charles DeHarrack, a Jewish-American musician who set up his own Serbian singing society in Cleveland; and finally the filmmaker Frank Melford, who in 1932 produced one of the first sound-films in Serbo-Croatian. In these intriguing stories, Larson shows that official



Yugoslav policies toward its “diaspora” were not always coherent because different actors pursued diverging agendas. At the same time, such far-away causes such as Yugoslavia’s unification and Serbia’s liberation had enough appeal for people without any direct family connection to become enthusiastic supporters, thereby carving out a small role in history for themselves.

**Vesna Đikanović** continues the discussion of the relationship between the complex realities in Yugoslavia and its connections with “its” emigrants and the relations among different emigrant groups. The emigrants claimed by Yugoslavia represented the multi-layered heterogeneity of the country, coming from different polities, speaking different languages, and adhering to different faiths. Times of extremes can accentuate and overcome such divisions, which is what Đikanović reveals in her analysis of humanitarian efforts by Yugoslav emigrants of different political convictions during World War II. The unification of pro-liberation immigrant organizations under one roof was a difficult task, given their fundamental disagreements over the political setup of Yugoslavia. Slovenian, Serb, and Croat immigrant organizations in the United States pursued different visions for “their” country after eventual liberation. Neither were they unanimous between themselves as their political leanings reached from left to right. Nevertheless, the humanitarian needs of war, the successes of Tito’s partisans, and the pressure by US foreign policy helped achieve more cooperation than any time before and after that. From Đikanović’s analysis, we can conclude that diasporas are events.

Finally, **Anna Mazurkiewicz** takes the story into the Cold War as another period of far-reaching politicization of foreign policy. The dramatic event of the communist takeover helped diasporas to flourish as emigrant activists suddenly had a new political mission and enjoyed support from governments. Both sides in the bloc confrontation tried to win “hearts and minds.” Émigrés played an important role in that. Communist regimes, for example, invited like-minded emigrants to repatriate. The United States and other Western powers, in their turn, supported anti-communist exile groups hoping to affect change behind the Iron Curtain. State and private cooperation led in 1949 to the establishment of the National Committee for a Free Europe (in 1954, renamed Free Europe Committee), which supported the anti-communist émigré association. The Soviet Union and its allies worked to undermine it, indicating that the Cold War was also a period of intense transnational contestation. In the 1950s, the Free Europe Committee successfully influenced public opinion, especially in the United States, which lived through a wave of intense anti-Communism. Communist repatriation campaigns were less successful—in the Polish case, where numbers were high, many “repatriates” were people forced to leave their homes in those parts of Poland that the Soviet Union had annexed. So again, minority and migration policy became intertwined.

With this special issue, we hope to provide new explanations why the assumption that there is a “diaspora” is so widespread and powerful in Central and Southeastern Europe. On the one hand, this idea is grounded on discourses and political responses

triggered by persistent migration since the nineteenth century. On the other hand, it reflects the complexities of nation-building in a pluri-ethnic region with recurrent border changes. The envisioned diasporas were a chronotopos, in which the timeline of national awakening merged with the spatial spread of the nation. The appreciation of diasporas also had a compensatory function, giving a positive spin to emigration rather than scrutinizing the failure of the native country to retain people. The authors of this special issue show that diaspora is not a natural form of being but a cognitive and political construct—and, as such, it is something real, as people do certain things because they believe to be a diaspora or are addressed as such. Such as any other group category, the diaspora needs constant work to be maintained; it is especially fluid and volatile because it is not built on the solid foundations of a state apparatus. Identities like these, which are not daily reproduced by powerful institutions governing the lives of their citizens, can quickly emerge but are also likely to quickly dissipate if no institutionalization happens. However, the very fact of the possibility of becoming a diaspora was not completely random and contingent. The various state-led diaspora-building initiatives contributed to fertilizing the soil from whence—at least short-lived—diaspora identities could grow.

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