

# THE BORDERS OF THE POLITY. MIGRATION AND SECURITY ACROSS THE EU AND THE BALKANS

Edited by Luisa Chiodi



1129

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Luisa Chiodi

THE BORDERS OF THE POLITY. MIGRATION  
AND SECURITY ACROSS THE BALKANS AND THE EU

1. *Introduction*

People displacements, internal and external to the Balkans, provoked by wars as much as by economic hardship, have been one of the main features of the troubled post-communist transformation in the region. Notwithstanding the desire of EU member states to isolate themselves from the impact of changes in neighbouring countries, the attempt to establish impenetrable borders to ward off the contagion failed and yet it had many negative implications that deepened the “crisis of transformation” of the Balkans.

Post-communism overturned the situation of borders and people’s mobility in the EU-SEE region. Yugoslavia used to have open borders with the EEC but the new states born from its dissolution sealed their common frontiers and witnessed the closing of formerly open western borders. The rest of the people in the region experienced the possibility to go west after the dismantling of the iron curtain but had to overcome new barriers imposed by the EU countries on their regained freedom of movement.

This publication looks at migrations from the Balkans to the European Union in parallel with internal population movements in the region. There is clearly a distinction to be drawn between “voluntary” and “involuntary” population movements since the experience of ordinary migrants from the Balkans differs from that of the war-refugees’ forced displacement in former Yugoslavia. Yet, the interest in studying the two flows in parallel lies first of all in that both internal and external movements result from the same difficult post-communist transformation and have an impact on its outcomes. Secondly, both movements of populations have in common that they constitute a challenge, or a perceived challenge,

to EU security and are thus widely regarded as an obstacle to the process of regional and EU integration of the Balkans. Finally, studying the social phenomena that occur in the European space, both “East” and “West”, with the same analytical lenses helps to overcome the shortcomings of Balkanism as analyzed by Todorova (1997) in her seminal, renowned work.

This publication, focusing the attention on the current situation in the field of people’s movements, examines the implication they have on state sovereignty as well as the redefinition they entail of individual and collective identities. This book is structured into three parts reflecting the main dimensions we wished to explore. In the first, we looked at the challenges of change and the failures to address them: the destabilization of the Balkans and the population movements it entails are analysed in relation with the crisis of the socialist systems and with the dynamics produced after their collapse. Three articles consider dynamics of migration unfolding within the Balkans: in the first case the migration from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia is studied in historical perspective; in the second the phenomenon of internal migration in Albania is examined from the point of view of causes and effects; and the third article explores the characteristics of the migrant group that best represents the experience of globalization in the Balkans, namely that of Chinese communities in Bulgaria. Finally, an exploration into the case of Turkey contributes to widen the discussion to an example in which migration from the Balkans instead has been functional to the construction of the modern nation-state from the XX century onwards.

In the second part, we debate about the cultural borders of the polity by examining the struggle for re-incorporation into the body polity of refugees in the Balkans in the case-study of Bosnia-Herzegovina and by considering the struggle for inclusion of migrants from the Balkans in the EU hosting countries in the case of former Yugoslav citizens that moved to Italy.

In the third part, we investigate the question of the border of inclusion and exclusion by exploring the phenomenon of public participation of migrants in the hosting polities. Three papers look at two parallel cases, Greece and Italy, of struggles for the inclusion of migrants from Albania and Rumania (only in Italy), while at the same time pointing out the transnational bottom-up dynamics that are created.

## *2. The challenges of change*

The experience of change in time of prosperity is different from the need of change generated by economic decline. Yet these concepts are always susceptible of interpretation. On the one hand, it is widely known that former Yugoslavia was considered the first candidate for EEC integration, had it not followed the path of a bloody dissolution. The debt that plagued the country was not much worse than that threatening the communist regime in Poland or Hungary, while

the system of self-management apparently offered ampler room for developing managerial autonomous entrepreneurs, had a new legal framework been rapidly adopted. On the other hand, what currently dominates the EU space is a climate of insecurity, due to economic stagnation even though it is among the wealthiest regions in the world.

Radical changes are often regarded as a threat by policy makers, interest groups, and the population at large, the degree of intensity varying according to their perception of reality. However, the manipulation of fears on the side of power holders is all but uncommon. The bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia did not result from spontaneous social movements but it was the product of power holders' manipulation of the insecurity generated by a long-lasting social and economic crisis combined with the radical disappearance of the communist sources of power legitimacy. Instead of working for the transformation of a multinational authoritarian state into a democratic one, local policy-makers worked to re-define the borders and contents of the State, by attempting to establish ethnically "homogenous" states. Given the multinational character of the region and the level of interdependence within the Balkans, that goal was impossible to achieve without the wars that actually ravaged Yugoslavia in the years 1991-2001. As the uprisings in Kosovo in 2004 confirmed, this process is not over yet.

The policy of ethnic cleansing – designed and implemented by the local political leaders in former Yugoslavia and stemming from a political project rationally defined and systematically pursued – constitutes the end of the spectrum of this manipulation of the fear of change. As for the EU member-states, the manipulation of the widespread hostility towards migration differs from ethnic cleansing in that it has not produced policies of physical elimination. However, what they have in common are the mechanisms of dehumanization of the "other".

Interestingly, the first refugees fleeing from the wars in former Yugoslavia were received with solidarity and hosted as war victims in the EU countries. Once the collapse of the communist regimes was considered achieved<sup>1</sup> or war suffering ended, the EU public opinions reacted with fears to the new migration flows from the region (and beyond). The media fuelled concerns about the social, cultural and economic welfare and some political formations gave legitimacy to xenophobic reactions. The manipulation of the fear, among other things, made public opinions accept violations of human rights in the name of the struggle

<sup>1</sup> Looking at one of the cases explored in this book one can observe that the Albanian migrants themselves were initially benevolently considered "refugees" in Italy or repatriated ethnic Greeks in Greece (or called *Vorioi pirotetas*), and then downgraded to the level of "economic migrants" soon after the first massive inflow in 1991. This changed perspective entailed xenophobic reactions in the two hosting public spheres throughout the 90s. It is interesting to notice that in Albanian the term "*refugiat*" outlasted the terminological transformation in the hosting country. See the chapters devoted to Albanian migrations in this book.

against illegal migration<sup>2</sup>. In criminalizing undocumented migrants one ignores the fact that almost all legal migrants in countries such as Italy and Greece have previously been illegal. It is almost exclusively thanks to so called “laws of regularization” that migrants acquire work permits in Southern Europe. Most people spend thus a period of time as undocumented workforce in the local sizable grey economies before acquiring legal status.

What the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia during the 90s clearly shows are the consequences of rejecting differences (in their complexity and variety) as a threat to security, while seeking for homogenization as the solution for security in times of change. Moreover, it shows that it is impossible to achieve homogenization: in spite of all the violence, ethnic cleansing, brain drain, and migrations, the Balkan societies remain heterogeneous and those who resettled faced new (and under many respects unexpected) forms of exclusion.

The research by Baroncini and Zuccheri highlights this aspect while exploring the implication of the radical changes produced by the crisis of socialism and its aftermath in the Croatian town of Split. Here the combination of economic failure – with its dire consequences of dismantling factories and exploding unemployment –, the Yugoslav secession war, and considerable inflows of people from Herzegovina transformed a socialist-oriented town into a stronghold of nationalists. The then president of the newly born Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, granted the passport to the newcomers in the name of the common ethnic identity (as Herzegovinians are ethnically considered Croats). However, as soon as the political context changed, the “new comers” from Herzegovina, in spite of their claims, were no longer welcomed by their co-nationals. Rather, they came to be identified with aliens that spoiled the urban identity with their mountain culture, or made fast money thanks to illegal trafficking and unconventional networks, creating palpable tensions with the local dwellers. After the devastating consequences of ethnic nationalism, what is now being rediscovered in Split, as in the rest of the region, is that cultural differences cannot be reduced to ethnicity: they include gender and age; urban and rural divides; political and social dimensions.

The problem of difference and exclusion emerges also in the study by Zonzini, who looks at internal population movements in Albania. People’s mobility, highly restricted under the communist regime, exploded in the 90s after its collapse. Democratization in Albania entailed the need for, as much as the right to, mobility of the population in search of a better life – not only abroad but also at home. Due to the limited economic resources available and the weakness of the state infrastructure, this radical transformation could hardly be managed. Internal migrations put a considerable strain on the main urban areas where people concen-

<sup>2</sup> See on this point (Dal Lago, A., *Non-persone: l'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1999) and the various reports from international human rights groups such as Amnesty International.



trated, adding a further dimension to the numerous challenges of transition. Internal migration creates numerous social, economic, and cultural tensions that are potentially highly disruptive. In particular the inability of institutions to integrate the new city dwellers resulted in their dangerous socio-cultural marginalization.

Post-communism as the clear-cut adoption of a new system replacing the old one and was and still is, at least for the Balkans, about radical changes. Those changes, however, are not limited to former communist societies only, as much as their implications could not be circumscribed to a single country. The Balkans could not avoid the implications coming from the European integration processes, nor those coming from globalization; on the contrary, these phenomena constitute the very context in which their post-communist transformation is embedded. In this regard, it is important to observe that the Balkans are experiencing many new challenges among which, unexpectedly, the role of host countries to new migration flows. The research conducted by Krasteva in Bulgaria examines then the dynamics created by the transformation of the country into a hosting society by studying in particular the settling of the first Chinese communities.

Finally, Salomoni's exploration of the historical trajectory of migrations from the Balkans to Turkey during the XX century adds further elements to the discussion highlighting the centrality of the temporal dimension. Historically, refugees from various parts of the former Ottoman Empire found in modern Turkey a harbour and a new motherland. Albanian and Serbo-Croatian Muslims gave strong allegiance throughout the century to the project of modern state formation in the country. Today, the country is experiencing a new wave of migrants from the Balkans that is no longer connected with the "retreat" of the Ottomans from Europe, but comes from the post-communist crisis of the neighbouring countries. Now that Turkey is gradually re-discovering and re-evaluating its multicultural local traditions, the Balkan communities in the country fear that they might lose the protection they were given so far.

### *3. The cultural borders of the polity*

The past European experience of the nation-state is what most Balkan countries have been striving for. However, this nation-state model, deeply scarred by two world wars, that was valid during the cold-war confrontation, is no longer sustainable. Today the challenge to democracy in Europe is increasingly that of the representation of diversities and of governing differences. The EU member states on one hand have committed themselves to progressive political integration and strive to devise new forms of transnational governance, but on the other, faced with migration, they are confronted with the challenges of cultural pluralization.

During the 90s, the aim of constructing homogenous nation-states out of a multinational context in former Yugoslavia resulted in ethnic cleansing. Devas-

tating violence was orchestrated to force people out of their land and dislocations reached massive dimensions. Available data in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina indicate that 1.2 million people fled abroad and another million were displaced internally. The 7<sup>th</sup> Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement guaranteed the return of the refugees but, as stressed in the article by Sekulic, the exit from the “repatriation labyrinth” was not found. Not only could the situation not be reversed, but also the process of return was hampered by political as well as social and economic reasons<sup>3</sup>.

Sekulic’s analysis focuses then on the current role of “war-migrant” associations in the country, that is to say organizations of refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and returnees. The research provides an overview of the dozen of these associations currently active in BiH and stresses how they managed to get the repatriation, social re-integration and cultural recognition of refugees acknowledged as a central issue for stability and democracy in the region. The interviews conducted by Sekulic with the representatives of the “war-migrant associations”<sup>4</sup> in Bosnia-Herzegovina show concerns that transcend the simplified limited notion of collective ethnic/national identities. Although the interviewees underline their ethnic identity, they consider social and political problems predominant and common to all citizens in the region. Nevertheless “war-migrants” were persecuted as “Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, Albanians”, and now they are obliged to defend themselves as “Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs, and Albanians”.

If the resort to violence is ruled out in Bosnia-Herzegovina, then “war-migrant associations” may be central in developing a new culture of citizenship based on the recognition of ethnic diversity. Currently citizenship rights are often recognized to war migrants in BiH but they remain mostly on paper. Despite figures on the success of the return process, it is clear that the data speak only about the success of the return of properties. What representatives of “war-migrant associations” point out is that neither “being among your own people” nor belonging to a minority among the “others” does guarantee proper respect of their citizenship rights<sup>5</sup>. The struggle to make institutions responsive to the war-migrants’ rights will benefit all citizens, as the struggle for legality is at the core of the democratization of the country.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR statistical sources consider 987,713 to be the total number of Refugees and Displaced Persons who returned to/within BiH from 1996 to the end of February 2004. See the chapter by Sekulic in this book.

<sup>4</sup> What was labelled as “war-migrant associations” are organizations of refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and returnees. That term was used in order to consider all different situations in the field and highlight how these organizations display behaviours that resemble those of ordinary migrant groups once their situation stabilizes and they have to (re)integrate socially.

<sup>5</sup> The access to more than one passport among citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina has been common (especially for ethnic Croats and Serbs) and yet it has not provided firm guarantees of enjoyment of the citizenship entitlement. This is the case of Herzegovians mentioned above.

If in Bosnia a new culture of citizenship is still to be developed along with democratic institutions, one can observe that a cultural-bound definition of the nation-state predominates in many EU countries when discussing about migration. Interestingly, among scholars that argue about the risks posed by migration among the EU member states, some openly refer to Balkan examples and use the idea of "balkanization" to discuss the risk of multiculturalism as threatening the cohesion of the polity<sup>6</sup>. This is the case of the Italian town of Trieste, analyzed by Richter. Most debates in the public sphere focus on the benefits deriving from the presence of foreign labour and yet the fears of cultural hybridization are widespread in the local public opinion.

The contribution by Lapov provides further evidence of the difficulty in dealing with cultural difference in an EU country discussing the highly controversial issue of the integration of Roma who migrated from former-Yugoslavia to Italy. Here the autochthonous Romani community (Sinti and Roma) has traditionally been highly marginalized. The response on the part of the local authorities to the inflows of Roma from former Yugoslavia, based on the previous experience, proved inadequate. Former Yugoslav Roma were hosted in Italian "camps for nomads", regardless of the fact that they were used to ordinary housing conditions at home. Before the conflicts in the 90s, Roma had experienced a certain socio-cultural and even political integration in the country of origin. These previous experiences, together with the support of the local civil society, contributed to their mobilization and they re-organized themselves into associations active at the local as well as at the transnational level. Despite their precarious situation, the initiatives undertaken have a positive impact on the situation of the whole of the Romani population in the country, foreign and local.

Moreover, looking at one of the most dynamic contexts, the municipality of Florence, Lapov notices that migrant associations there have been striving to improve both the social and the cultural integration of their community. In particular, the struggles for the abolition of "camps for nomads" were carried on along with initiatives in the field of cultural recognition since the two aspects are seen as intertwined by Romani associations. The fight against social marginalization and discrimination requires their mobilization around socio-political as well as cultural issues.

The long lasting controversy between liberals and communitarians in social theory highlights the ambivalent nature of identity politics<sup>7</sup>. Both East and West identity politics are double-edged due to the essentializing conception of ones' own culture and the fact that they put a brake on ordinary processes of hybrid-

<sup>6</sup> For a recent case see Tibi, B., *Euro-Islam: l'integrazione mancata*, (It. Transl.), Venezia, Marsilio, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Among the many political theorists that recently worked in this field one finds: Fraser; Habermas; Honneth; Young; Taylor; Rorty etc.

ization. Identity politics can easily be transformed into a pathway to segregation when the majority group refuses to deal with minorities or migrant groups, as much as it can lead to a form of sectarianism on the side of minorities or migrant groups in response to their marginalization, discrimination or misrecognition. Some scholars argue that the solution against sectarianism consists in placing the struggles for recognition in the context of social justice instead of in the context of the self-realization of identity politics<sup>8</sup>.

However, migration can be considered a form of redistribution that entails, sooner or later, the emergence of struggles for recognition. As underlined by feminist theorists in particular, rather than fearing differences and their emergence in the public sphere, one should more often recall that the integration into the body politics of new subjects always entails the recognition of some kind of difference<sup>9</sup>. It is not accidental that the political history of the XX century revolves around the tension between recognition and redistribution. The collapse of state socialism showed that social justice cannot be achieved with difference-blind politics of redistribution in favour of the abstract idea of the socialist worker. Nationalism, on the other hand, has proven equally illusory in its aim to reconcile sectarianism (considered as a way to achieve group security) and redistribution, as mentioned above. It is only thanks to democratic institutions that the conditions for democratizing struggles for both recognition and redistribution are created. Therefore building democratic institutions in the Balkans assumes a fundamental role, as well as their protection in the EU space.

#### 4. *The struggle for inclusion in the body polity and the political opportunity structure*

The scholars' analysis of social movements highlighted the role of the political opportunity structure in supporting and regulating the emergence of claims coming from the civil society in the public sphere<sup>10</sup>. The central role of the political opportunity structure also emerges looking at the third aspect that this publication deals with, that is to say the participation of migrants in the host countries'

<sup>8</sup> Bauman argued in this sense, see Bauman, Z., *Community. Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Oxford-Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001. Fraser instead considers false the antithesis between struggles for recognition and those of redistribution and develops a two dimensional approach, see Fraser, N. and Honneth, A., *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*, London-New York, Verso, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> The most important tradition in this respect is the feminist. In the case of the Balkans see Ivekovic, R and Mostov, J., *From Gender to Nation*, Ravenna, Longo, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Many theorists of social movements make use of the framework of "political opportunity structure" to analyse the set of conditions that offer opportunities to develop collective action. It is normally considered as consisting of rules, institutional structures, political cleavages, elite alliances and the like at the level of national political systems. See della Porta, D., and Diani, M., *Social movements: an Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1999, for a discussion of the main theoretical contributions.

public sphere. Three of the papers included in this book explore the emergence of migrant associations and migrant media in two EU host countries, Italy and Greece, and the transnational dynamics thus produced. In particular, they explore whether migrant participation has potential for democratizing everyday life in the host as well as in the home countries.

Comparing the pattern of public participation of Albanian migrants in Italy and Greece as presented in the papers by Chiodi & Devole and Maroukis corroborated the findings of other studies: the different structure of opportunity provided by the host country affects the migrants' capacity for agency and claim-making<sup>11</sup>. The different context in the two EU countries has resulted in different rates of the Albanian community's participation in associations, namely higher in Italy than in Greece, and, what is more, in different priorities in the associational agenda.

In Italy Albanian associations are predominantly occupied with community initiatives and cultural politics, while in Greece the immigration policy-regime has instigated significant mobilization on regularization issues. On the one hand, the fact that in Italy active minorities are concerned with issues such as the restoration of the community's name after years of denigration reflects the experience of an extremely negative representation in the host country. On the other, the struggle for recognition of cultural difference is linked with their endeavours to obtain a better quality of integration, which in Greece cannot be dealt with yet. In Italy, among documented migrants the basic needs and rights have generally been looked after, while in Greece problems with the legal status and work permit remain central. Moreover, the susceptibility of the Greek public opinion on issues pertaining to the cultural pluralization of their nation-state is generally higher.

In addition, the paper by Chiodi & Devole highlights how Albanian citizens show different patterns of behaviour in the host countries as compared with the situation in their native country. In Albania the scarcity of spontaneous civic engagement has been widely observed. The different context in the host country produces different needs, as well as different opportunities that Albanian migrants seem eager to explore at present.

Today, the Balkan states are plagued by the distrust of public opinions towards their weak institutions prey to particularistic interests. Migratory projects can also be considered as signs of the crisis these polities face. Applying Hirshmann's renowned terminology, migration can be seen as constituting an *exit* choice, largely prevailing over *voice* that is rare in the region and it easily entails the recourse to violence<sup>12</sup>. The emergence of organized migrant groups in

<sup>11</sup> See for instance Koopmans, R. and Statham P. (eds.), *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics. Comparative European Perspectives*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> We refer here to the seminal book and category of Hirshmann, A., *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Responses to the Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970.

the public sphere of host countries is the sign that individual emancipation requires at a certain point collective efforts of voice after the initial exit choice. Moreover, it shows that in short periods of time new definitions of identity and interests can be born out of new experiences and interactions.

Finally, the reference to the political structure of opportunities is not meant as a way to reaffirm the nation-state as the only unit of analysis. Quite the opposite, the research included in this book allows for consideration of the role of political opportunities at the local level<sup>13</sup>. In Italy, where migrant public participation is mainly dealt with by local governments, sizeable differences in migrant participation can be observed. The different capacity of response on the part of local institutions is one of Lapov's findings in his analysis of the mobilization of Romani communities in Italy and Chiodi & Devole's in the case of the Albanians in Italy.

### 5. *Transnational public spheres*

The end of the cold war generated greater interest in the functioning of transnational spaces and a lot of hopes in the power of transnational dynamics to enlarge the social and political sphere beyond the borders of the nation-state. The EU integration process and its enlargement further contributed to these expectations with the hope to see growing new spaces of public critical discussion beyond the borders of the nation-state<sup>14</sup>.

Migrants epitomize this transnationalization with a life in-between the host country and their country of origin: culturally, economically, but also politically. Their inhabiting multiple worlds and sustaining multiple loyalties can be considered a resource rather than an obstacle to integration. In the case of migration from the Balkans to the EU, the geographical proximity facilitates the creation of a transnational dynamic and helps to maintain contacts with home. What is more, immigrants from Balkan countries could entertain with the hosting context a special relation due to the prospect of EU integration, since the enlarging borders of the EU polity are expected to include them in the near future.

In contrast to the idea of a single public sphere as conceptualized in the case of the nation-state, the three papers included in the last section of this book considered it important to explore the public dimension of the transnational dynamics that migration produces. The researches conducted by Chiodi & Devole,

<sup>13</sup> Moreover, most of our researches give a prominent role to the analysis of identity formation and to transnational dynamics.

<sup>14</sup> Among the forerunners in the literature on transnationalism see Appadurai, A., *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996. For discussion about Balkan cases see Kaldor, M., «Transnational Civil Society», in Bianchini, S. and Schöpflin G. (eds.), *State Building in the Balkans. Dilemmas on the Eve of the 21st Century*, Ravenna, Longo, 1998; Mostov, J., «Soft Borders: Rethinking Sovereignty and Democracy», in Bianchini, S., Schöpflin, G., Shoup, P. (eds.), *Post-Communist Transition as a European Problem*, Ravenna, Longo, 2002.

Maroukis and Ban explore the creation of plural transborder publics from the bottom-up, where migrants take active part in and contribute to the formation of identities, opinions, and interests<sup>15</sup>. They looked at the migrants' transnational network and public participation with their potential dual democratizing role in two Mediterranean EU countries, Italy and Greece, and in the sending countries, Albania and Rumania. Then those papers consider whether the experience gained by migrants in the new country has a feedback effect in the Balkans.

The findings however are not encouraging in most of the directions considered. There is clearly a lack of institutional engagement in creating opportunities for migrants, both on the part of the sending and on that of the host country. As a result of the scarcity of public policies and opportunities provided at all the levels considered (from the EU down to the municipal level), the reach of migrants' participation is constrained at local level. This can be seen considering for example remittances that, in the case of Albania as much as Rumania, are more important than other financial sources, such as foreign aid and foreign direct investments, in reducing the economic hardship of the post-communist transformation. Yet, only private businesses have emerged, and mainly in the field of money transfer, while the level of credit activities remains very low in the Balkans. The same can be said looking at the realm of so-called "cultural remittances". Despite the outcry over the negative implication of the brain drain from the country, few attempts have been made to support the return home of the thousands of Albanian students attending EU universities. Finally, international cooperation is no exception. Despite the rhetoric in the field, migrants are seldom acknowledged as interlocutors.

Migrants in southern Europe are highly constrained in their cultural, social, and economic cross-border mobility by the current visa regimes that causes this mobility to be expensive and burdensome. As highlighted above, their condition of marginalization constrains the scope of their activities at local level in the case of Italy, or at the level of issues that can be dealt with in Greece.

Where, on the contrary, one finds evidence of transborder public spheres is the field of the media (printed and electronic), which effectively cross the borders of nation-states. The migrants' media is where spaces for public critical discussions across state borders do exist. In Albania, where powerful interest

<sup>15</sup> A "public sphere" is commonly intended as a space of public critical discussion with democratizing potentials where citizens discuss matters of common interest, organize and form their own opinions, identities, and preferences, and provide legitimacy to the decision-making of political authorities. Originally seen as one of the properties of the nation-state, the idea of the public sphere can find interesting applications in the study of transnational phenomena. This area of inquiry has clearly strong normative aims. Among the exploratory work in this field, see for instance: Guidry, J. A., Kennedy, M.D., and Zald, M.N. (eds.), *Globalization and Social Movements. Culture, Power and the Transnational Public Sphere*, Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

networks take over state institutions and can hardly find a counterweight in the so-called fourth power, itself highly manipulated by questionable business interests, the presence of external publics may become central, potentially in the medium run.

However, for the moment the expectation that transborder public dynamics can counter the marginalization of individual migrants and open new spaces for democratisation from below finds only limited evidence<sup>16</sup>. Rather, one finds examples of problematic developments in the transnational arena. This has been the case of the diaspora mobilization in favour of violent nationalist politics in the case of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

There are other troubling scenarios in the transnational arenas that emerge currently in connection with migration when, for instance, the experience of misrecognition produces resentment that can be exploited at the political level. This has already happened in a few recent episodes of transnational identity politics involving Albania and Greece<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, grassroots transnational relations are deeply influenced by the state of the political relations between countries and can be easily manipulated from above<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the inclusion in the EU space could provide the cultural, political and institutional framework to democratize these conflicts.

## 6. *The borders of the European polity*

EU public opinions in most cases ignore the costs of instability in the Balkans

<sup>16</sup> One case of the democratizing potentials of these struggles can be identified in the field of minority protection in Greece. Here autochthonous minorities benefit from the push towards cultural pluralization carried on by Albanian migrants. Examples of democratizing potentials in the sending countries are also examined in the paper by Ban.

<sup>17</sup> The strong frustration accumulated by migrants in hosting Mediterranean cultures can by itself produce a highly negative backlash in the medium run. Instances of such problems emerged in the last few months on trivial occasions such as a football match between the national teams of Greece and Albania that saw violence erupting in the streets of Athens between Albanian migrant supporters of the national team and local supporters of the Greek national team. The death of one person produced heated debates in the media of the two countries. Another possible example of considerable mobilization in both the hosting and the sending country's public sphere originated in repeated cases of Albanian students in Greek secondary schools who were denied the right to carry the Greek flag for the annual parade. See the regular reports and debates on the web page and mailing list of the Albanian NGO *Mjaft* [www.mjaft.org](http://www.mjaft.org) that mobilized in Tirana to denounce the treatment of their co-nationals in the neighbouring country.

<sup>18</sup> The power resources that are necessary to emerge in the public sphere of a nation-state are even more important in the transnational arenas. The dynamic between grassroots and elites in the definition of public issues is similar at domestic and transnational level. The former without the latter can hardly manage to impose an agenda in the public arena, unless they become a strong social movement able to draw from the grassroots the power to emerge. In the transnational arena, social movements able to counterbalance the lack of institutional support are not common. For a comprehensive analysis of the sources of social power see Poggi G., *Forms of Power*, Cambridge, Polity Press, Malden (MA), Blackwell, 2001.



for the EU member states. They can be calculated in terms of the financial expenditure to limit migrant waves, as well as to organize military operations, run existing protectorates, and support the economic recovery, all with uncertain outcomes. In the case of migration, unrealistic attempts at preventing it have been detrimental for both sending and receiving countries. The adoption of restrictive policies with subsequent waves of "regularization" contributed to fuel the shadow economies of the Mediterranean EU countries and strengthen criminal networks interested in profiting from migratory pressures. In the Balkans, the burgeoning informal economy reduced the spaces for democracy by curtailing public resources and by legitimizing the spread of illegal practices.

The case of migration from Rumania to Italy, explored in Ban's paper, shows the advantages of a more advanced stage of integration of the sending country into the EU. A new visa regime granted by the EU in 2001 changed the situation of people mobility: Rumanian migrants have been able to move freely thanks to the availability of tourist visas. Moreover, despite the fact that Rumanians became the first migrant group in Italy in the last few years, the host country's media did not mobilize the public opinion against them as in the Albanian case during the 90s. Anyway, although the new visa regime increased transborder mobility, the problem of dysfunctional borders is far from being solved as work permits remain highly restricted<sup>19</sup>. However, the new arrangement considerably broadens the space for movement, including the circular movement that injects new dynamism into the sending country's economy and society<sup>20</sup>.

It is today widely acknowledged that the remaining sources of instability in the Balkans and on the borders can be reduced if a clear EU prospect is defined for the whole region. The EU Enlargement Eastwards was a first, appropriate answer to the common process of change produced in Europe by the collapse of the communist regimes. As for the Balkans, deeply affected by the endless Yugoslav collapse and the hardship of their economic transformation, Brussels seems increasingly aware that the process of integration into the European polity provides new opportunities not only for the stability of the future members but also for the EU space itself<sup>21</sup>. The case study of Trieste proposed by Richter

<sup>19</sup> For the analysis of the idea of "functional and dysfunctional borders" at the origin of the IBEU project and this publication, see Gropas R., «Functional Borders, Sustainable Security and EU-Balkan Relation», in *South European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Transnational social and economic phenomena are not unidirectional: the migration from Rumania to Italy is accompanied by the delocalization of Italian firms and entrepreneurs to Rumania where about 10,000 Italian citizens hold a second residence and 300,000 Rumanian citizens work for Italian firms. On this point see Stocchiero, A., *Migration Flows and Small and Medium Sized Enterprise Internationalisation between Romania and the Italian Veneto Region*, CESPI, www.cespi.it, 2002, and the article by Cornel Ban in this publication.

<sup>21</sup> The European Commission outlined a regional strategy for the Balkans for the first time in

shows how the multi-cultural character of the town has received a new positive evaluation due to the process of EU enlargement. While migrants remain a source of concern, the Slovenian minorities significantly improved their status as the process of EU enlargement progressed.

There are encouraging signs that the European institutions are gradually realizing that the problem of stability in the Balkans is not only connected with the economic, institutional and social recovery of those countries as it had been the case with Central Europe: what emerged in addition to that is the weakness of the states resulting from the Yugoslav dismemberment and the Albanian collapse of 1997. So, what is required here is also the re-organization of the territorial and institutional framework in a regional perspective, against the idea of ethnic states. The recovery of the region and its integration into the EU requires then an approach that can adjust to the specificities of each context while supporting their regional integration.

Despite the growing awareness of the complex situation in the EU-Balkan relations, the uncertain EU attempts at sealing the borders with the Balkans show that while the Balkan states are reluctant to accept the implications of their will of inclusion within the EU in terms of regional integration and minority rights, the EU itself – in spite of its integration process – is still conditioned by the reluctance of its member states to accept that changes require an increasingly supranational approach as much as they entail people's freedom of movement and the cultural pluralization of their public spheres.

1997. Two years later, as soon as the NATO air strike on Serbia and Montenegro stopped, a Stability Pact for South East Europe was defined for the whole region on a German initiative. Finally, in 2003, the Thessaloniki meeting of the European Council confirmed that the integration into the European Union was a possibility offered to all countries of the so-called Western Balkans.

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# EUROPE and the BALKANS INTERNATIONAL NETWORK



Università di Bologna

COSTITUITO ALLA FINE DEL 1993 CON IL SOSTEGNO FINANZIARIO DELL'UNIONE EUROPEA (PROGRAMMA HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY), IL NETWORK INTERNAZIONALE "EUROPE AND THE BALKANS" SI AVVALE DELLA COOPERAZIONE DI ALCUNI FRA I PIÙ NOTI STUDIOSI DELL'EUROPA E DEGLI STATI UNITI. IL NETWORK NASCE COME INIZIATIVA UNIVERSITARIA E CON L'AMBIZIONE DI SVILUPPARE CONVERGENZA STRETTA FRA RICERCA SCIENTIFICA ED ESIGENZE DI INFORMAZIONE QUOTIDIANA NELLA NOSTRA SOCIETÀ.

THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK "EUROPE AND THE BALKANS" WAS ESTABLISHED AT THE END OF 1993 WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (HUMAN CAPITAL AND MOBILITY PROGRAMME) AND RELIES ON THE COLLABORATION OF SOME OF THE BEST-KNOWN EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN SCHOLARS. THE INITIATIVE WAS CONCEIVED AS A UNIVERSITY PROJECT, AIMING TO MAKE ACADEMIC RESEARCH MORE RELEVANT TO THE WIDESPREAD NEED FOR INFORMATION.

People displacements, internal and external to the Balkans, provoked by wars as much as by economic hardship, have been one of the main features of the troubled post-communist transformation in the region and they are considered today one of the main obstacles to the integration of the region into the EU. Ethnic cleansing and political failures in the Balkans drastically overthrew the previous geopolitical and demographic structure without creating stability. Today the borders of nation-states are unequivocally under strain, experiencing in different ways the challenges of globalization.

Written by a multinational team of senior and junior researchers, this book is a study of migrations and civil society across the Balkans and its EU neighbours. It focuses in particular on social organizations formed among refugees, displaced persons, and migrants that strive to emerge in the local and transnational public sphere. Their struggles for recognition, it is argued, display its fundamental role for democracy, both East and West. From different perspectives and in the various polities considered – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Turkey – these innovative studies consider how, via people mobility, the intercultural relations of the Balkans meet the process of integration of the European Union.

Cover Illustration: *Albanian workers in Rome at a demonstration organised by Trade Unions*  
Courtesy of Rando Devole

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