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LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS GLOBAL
CRISES (UN)APPLIED DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC: IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES
IN AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the experiences of global crises of the immigrants from former Yugoslavia and from the former Soviet Union in Austria and Hungary. Through online surveys combined with traditional and digital ethnography, the paper reveals the ways that experiences from previous global crises influenced post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants' perceptions, coping mechanisms, and resilience strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Global crises, (im)migrants, (post-) Yugoslav, (post-) Soviet, influence, coping, resilience, the COVID-19 pandemic, Austria, Hungary

Lessons from Previous Global Crises (Un)Applied During COVID-19 Pandemic: Immigrant Experiences in Austria and Hungary

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1. Introduction: Global Crises and Migrations

Human migration has been one of the most frequent adaptation strategies to various crises, from natural disasters (Ionesco and Chazalnoel, IOM 2015) to violent conflicts. In turn, mass migrations have also generated global crises: one of the striking examples is the continuous global migration crisis that peaked in 2015 in Europe. Simultaneously, the global crises are interdependent. As Brooks, Hoberg and Boeger (2020: 1) rightly note, “[G]lobal changes in temperature and rainfall would lead to drought, famine, and disease. These would in turn lead to conflict and disease. And conflict will turn inevitably to migration and more disease.”

Confirming the latter prediction, from the beginning, the global spread of the COVID-19 virus has also been one of the most hazardous results of high human mobility. However, contrary to most previous global crises, due to almost simultaneous lockdowns in nearly all parts of the world, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has so far heavily limited “the number of people crossing borders, especially on permanent or a long-term basis” (Gamlen, IOM 2020: 10). Though the scholarly literature does not directly relate the effects of pandemic to the migrations in the broader context of global crises, analyses of the COVID-19 pandemic and its’ impacts generates an emerging body of literature on migration discussing its immediate effects on migrants across the world.

On the one hand, media and scholarly literature have focused equally on the immediate negative effects of the pandemic on migrants. For example, in January 2021, *The Economist* stated: “[W]aiters and cleaners, many of whom are migrants, cannot work remotely” (January 30, 2021). Similarly, exploring such impact of the global health crisis in a local context of agricultural migrant workers in the Southern Italy, Tagliacozzo, Piscane and Kilkey (2020) find that the COVID-19 pandemic has interacted with the existing structural vulnerabilities. As a result, it produced adverse outcomes for migrant agricultural workers, while exposing the vulnerability of three linked systems – the agricultural labor market, migration and asylum, and healthcare (Tagliacozzo, Piscane and Kilkey 2020). Similar situations appeared in other parts of Europe. As Ryazantsev, Molodikova, and Bragin (2020) find the lack of international coordination in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the situation of migrant workers in both the Baltic and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) regions, who have suffered from the closure of borders and the absence of adequate social support.

On the other hand, media reported about an emerging trend of return of highly skilled East Europeans to their countries of origin. This trend was portrayed as a positive “brain gain” effect of the COVID-19 pandemic (as opposed to frequently discussed “brain drain”, the trend of westward emigration of well-educated and highly-skilled Eastern Europeans), as well as its immediate effects on economies.

In 2020 Europe saw a great reverse migration ... An estimated 1.3m Romanians went back to Romania... Politicians in eastern Europe had long complained of a “brain drain” as their brightest left in search of higher wages in the west. Now the pandemic, a shifting economy and changing work patterns are bringing many of them back. A “brain gain” has begun... A new grey economy has sprung up across the EU, with white-collar staff living in one country but illicitly working in another (and paying tax in the wrong place, as a result). Often these people are expats in their own country, physically at home, but telecommuting across a border (*The Economist*, January 30, 2021).

In addition to the emergence of this new type of grey economy, Geciene-Janulione (2020) confirms the “brain gain” trend concerning remigration of Lithuanian citizens and the use of their social remittances in a local work place, finding it a potentially positive mid-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Lithuania.

These observations generate three general assumptions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and migration flows.

- First, the most significant mobility patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic are the number of white-collar migrant workers, who – at least temporarily – re-migrated to their countries of origin; some of them continue to work remotely for their host countries, while others use their skills and knowledge obtained in emigration in a home country work place;
- Second, this trend generated a new ‘grey economy’ as white-collar migrants continued to pay taxes in host countries, while living in countries of origin, and
- Third and most general assumption is that blue-collar migrant workers seem to be more negatively affected, than the white-collar ones.

This paper contributes to the debate on the impact of the pandemic on migrants through four comparisons. First, it contextualizes the pandemic in an analysis of modern global crises that marked the edge of 20th and 21st centuries, namely: the dissolution of the Socialist bloc

followed by the dissolution of several socialist federations and the emergence of new states, and the global financial/economic crisis of 2008 – 2009. These two previous crises increased human mobility and generated significant waves of migrations, including the forced migration and labor and business-related transmigrations (Vinogradov 2008; IOM Global Migration Reports 2018, 2020). Simultaneously, these crises heavily affected citizens of the former Soviet Union (SU) and former Yugoslavia as many of them had to leave their homes and change their professions to survive. Therefore, this paper's second contribution to the debate about the impact of the pandemic on migrants is the exploration and comparison of experiences of two immigrant groups: one from the former Soviet Union (SU) and the other from former Yugoslavia. The third contribution of this paper is a comparison of the experiences of these two immigrant groups in two neighboring European Union (EU) member states, Austria and Hungary. During the Cold war, these countries were borderlands of the two institutionally and ideologically opposing blocs, while today they represent two different economic and political settings. The last, but analytically most important contribution, is the relationship between the socio-economic and psychological/cultural aspects of coping and resilience strategies of the representatives of these two groups of immigrants.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. By reviewing scholarly literature on post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav immigrant communities, the next section first conceptualizes them, and then outlines major assumptions about coping with crises and resilient strategies of their representatives. Section 3 describes the concepts used to analyze the coping and resilience strategies used by these two groups of migrants during the global crises. Section 4 briefly describes methods of inquiry used in the study. Section 5 analyzes Austria and Hungary as countries of immigration in general and of (post-)Yugoslav and (post-)Soviet immigrant communities. Section 6 analyzes and discusses experiences of post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants in Austria and Hungary during the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 7 concludes the study.

2. Studies of post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet migrant communities and their resilience throughout the global crises

Both post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet migrants constitute sizeable immigrant communities across Europe and the world. As such, they have attracted the attention of social scientists from various research fields, and their works can roughly be divided into two thematic blocs. The first focuses on the psychological and cultural aspects of migration and integration, tackling questions of identity and the relationship between the place of origin and place of destination. The second thematic bloc focuses on socioeconomic aspects of migration and integration, such as channels of integration to the labor market, including entrepreneurship.

Interestingly, post-Yugoslav migrant communities and diaspora have been analyzed mostly through the aspects of (roles of) nationalism and identities in migration and integration processes. For instance, exploring the Bosnian diaspora that emerged during the 1990s across the globe, a group of scholars found that their mobility (Valenta and Ramet, eds. 2011) and adaptation of old identities to new spaces (Halilovich 2013) were major integration and resilience strategies. Furthermore, Munro (2017) finds that their experience of migration was shaped by the socio-political contexts of departure and arrival, and migrants' ongoing connection with the homeland, their reception in the UK, and British media representations of Yugoslavia. Similarly, Kovacevic-Bielicki (2017) describes the war and migration experiences that have shaped the identities of former children/former refugees from former Yugoslavia in Norway. Though being raised (and in many cases even born) and socialized in Norway, most of these people perceived themselves as "others" and this identity has affected their life decisions in certain ways, for example, the choice of partners, and the choice of profession. As a result, the experience from Yugoslavia's dissolution has had a profound and long-lasting effect expressed in the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian proverb "neither on the earth, nor in the sky" on immigrants, who experienced it and on (the ways that they raise) their children even living in different geographical, institutional and social contexts (Kovacevic-Bielicki 2017).

Similarly, the scholarly literature has approached post-Soviet immigrant communities mostly in the context of socioeconomic integration in host societies. A number of studies reveal the economic and social disadvantages faced by migrants from former Soviet countries in receiving countries, and their entrepreneurship that emerges as a response to these disadvantages as a key integration and resilience strategy. For example, Shvarts (2010) and Ryazantsev et al. (2018), divide emigrations from the former Soviet Union into various migration waves, each targeting particular geographic destinations, forming certain social strata, and resulting in a certain type of employment and migrant entrepreneurship. Furthermore, post-Soviet female immigrants have attracted the attention of several researchers in various countries across Europe. For instance, Munkejord (2017) reveals the existence of a whole community of female Russian marriage immigrants in one of northern Norway's rural areas, who paralleled their social integration through the family with their economic integration through entrepreneurship. In contrast, the research in Hungary and Austria (Tepavcevic 2021) finds that the social and economic integration of immigrants from the post-Soviet countries usually happens through the common-culture-based post-Soviet, Russian-speaking immigrant community. Due to their experience of poverty during the Soviet times, they view themselves as more motivated, more flexible, and thus, more resilient to difficulties, than their local Austrian and Hungarian counterparts (Tepavcevic 2021).

Overall, the arguments proposed by this literature can be divided into two general categories: the first characterizing tangible socio-economic aspects, such as opportunity *versus* necessity motives/reasons for migration and integration, and immigrant entrepreneurship; and the second, constituting ‘soft’ aspects, such as cultural integration and national/cultural/geographical identities. As such, the literature suggests two complementing and two competing assumptions about immigrants’ resilience in crises:

- First, crises foster migrations, and long-term migrations, in their turn, reshape the identities of individuals, and the migrant groups (Kovacevic-Bielicki 2017; Tepavcevic 2021). This reshaping of identities seems to be a frequent psychological and cultural resilience strategy;
- Second, despite spending a long time in host countries and in some cases being born there, the majority of post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants perceive themselves as ‘others’ (Kovacevic-Bielicki 2017; Tepavcevic 2021), and usually identify themselves with their (parents’) countries of origin. Therefore, they also tend to retain connections with their former compatriots in host countries, and to use these networks to adapt to crises. At the same time, the emergence and vast use of social media networks fostered re-embeddedness of the migrant communities in their countries-of-origin and their diasporas and migrant communities in various places, geographies of immigration destinations (Halilovich 2013; Tepavcevic 2021).

These two assumptions, thus, point towards the psychological and cultural aspects of coping and resilience in times of crisis. The third assumption sheds light on the socioeconomic aspects of migrants’ resilience:

- Due to usually less privileged positions in host countries in general, and in their labor markets in particular, immigrants tend to be socially vulnerable, so entrepreneurship is their major socio-economic resilience strategy (Mesch and Czamanski 1997; Zueva 2005). Simultaneously, this underprivileged status serves to motivate immigrants to both create immigrant communities and overcome the difficulties of integration in places of destination (Vinogradov and Gabelko 2010; Shvart, 2010; Tepavcevic 2021).

3. Conceptual framework

[W]e can make significant progress by re-embedding migration research in a more general understanding of contemporary society, and linking it to broader theories of social change across a range of social scientific disciplines. A conceptual framework

for migration studies should take social transformation as its central category, in order to facilitate understanding of the complexity, interconnectedness, variability, contextuality and multi-level mediations of migratory processes in the context of rapid global change. (Castles 2010: 1565)

Inspired by Castles' statement, in defining the global crises, this paper employs Karl Polanyi's concept of transformation. As Novy (2021) points out, Polanyi gives two meanings to the term transformation:

1) Transformation as a *metamorphosis*, an evolutionary process of long-term change, and 2) transformation as a certain political-economic moment of radical rupture, a type of political revolution and short-term change which might accelerate ongoing profound transformations. The two conceptualizations rest on different temporalities: the first being an enduring phenomenon, a mainly socio-economic evolution, the second an abrupt rupture, a political revolution. (Novy 2021).

The latter meaning of Polanyi's concept of transformation – a political-economic moment of radical rupture – applied to the global context serves in this paper as the definition of the global crisis. Of course, the short-term cannot be understood without contextualizing it within the long term (Novy 2021). Psychological and cultural aspects of the present topic appear extremely important, especially in the context of a global pandemic, but they also touch upon resilience/recovery from the crisis. Here the recent work of Lucy Foulkes (2021) is essential: while the book evolves around the definitions and recognition of mental illness, she provides two concepts crucial to understanding the psychological, or 'soft' aspects of resilience that she conceptualizes as "psychological immunization": "the idea of stress inoculation is that (mildly) stressful challenges teach us ways to cope. When future stressors arise, we are then more likely to believe they are manageable" (Foulkes 2021: 203). Based on this, the paper explores whether and, if so, in what ways the immigrants' experiences from previous global crises provide "psychological immunization"? For instance, Foulkes points out that during the pandemic mental illnesses increased around the globe, people between the ages of 18 and 41 suffered most severely because of the isolation and lockdowns. The paper tests this proposition on two immigrant groups, post-Soviets and post-Yugoslavs dividing them into the three age groups: the youngest between 18-35 years old, a middle group between 35-50, the most mature respondents between 50-65.

Defining these immigrant groups and considering challenges that criticize a "methodological groupism" and "methodological nationalism" pose to the migration studies, the paper follows the notion by Kovacevic-Bielicki (2017: 29):

Discursively constructing and labeling any immigrant group for the purpose of research is, by necessity, a simplification, and, therefore, the labels do not signify clearly bounded or homogeneous groups. Any of these "groupist" terms may encompass people going through all kinds of identification and self-identification processes and

different feelings of (non)belonging... No matter how narrowed the pre-defined reasons for inclusion in the research project might be, the people included in the study would still be diverse and have numerous identifications and positions.

Therefore, in this study, immigrants from former Yugoslavia and from the former Soviet Union include refugees, who succeed in staying in Austria and Hungary, those who arrived after the conflicts, and those who continue to arrive for work, as university students, and because of marriage or lifestyle immigrants.

4. Methods of inquiry

The research was planned and executed in four stages. The first stage represented the collection, review and systematization of information received from media and scholarly literature related to various dimensions of the topic. The second stage constituted of the creation of online survey questionnaires and semi-structured interview questionnaires. The third (ongoing) stage involves mixed methods of inquiry, including online sociological surveys (containing quantitative and qualitative questions), and digital ethnographic research (defined as systematic participant observation of social media discussions, mostly Facebook and LinkedIn and thematic migrant, cultural, professional groups). Simultaneously, I conducted traditional ethnographic research: in my everyday life, I joined various women's immigrant social groups. As a post-Yugoslav woman, native Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian speaker and a close-to-native Russian speaker, who studied and spent almost two decades in Russia, my positionality has played an important role in research in both traditional and digital ethnography in both countries in question, whether I used the methods of digital ethnography or the traditional ones. Many of my acquaintances and friends are immigrants from the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia, and I am embedded in these communities. Such a position provides me with genuine insights into the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav communities across the EU and the world through the participant observation of the social networks, such as Facebook. I joined various social network groups and actively participate in discussions. I also follow Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian-language and Russian-language social and traditional media, and analyze the content, with a special focus on migrants' vlogs on YouTube. The last stage represents ongoing analysis and evaluation of the findings and their theoretical relevance.

Through this mixture of methodologies, I tried to find the answers to two major questions: 1) what has been the impact of the pandemic on these two groups of immigrants? And 2) considering coping (on a daily basis) with challenges posed by the crisis, and resilience (foreseeing beyond the current crisis), I attempted to understand, how experiences with

previous crises affected responses to the pandemic. Overall, I got responses from about 130 people. All the responses were treated anonymously. The findings are further represented and analyzed in Section 6.

5. Austria and Hungary as countries of immigration for post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrant communities

Since the de-occupation of Soviet troops in 1955, Austria has pursued neutrality (Kraler 2011). This was one of reasons why the Austrian capital, Vienna, hosts the headquarters of several important international organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IEA), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In addition to military neutrality, pragmatically planning economic recovery during the 1960s, the Austrian Government established bilateral agreements with several Southern European countries and Turkey about providing relatively cheap labor from these countries (Kraler 2011). As a result, Austria established a market economy and is currently one of the most developed European economies - dominated by small and medium enterprises, with food industries, machine and steel, chemical and vehicle, electric and electronic and wood and paper industries as the most important industrial branches (*Statistik Austria* 2021).

Coupled with stable economic development, Austria also gradually became one of Europe's major immigrant destinations: of its 9 million inhabitants, approximately 1,531,262 (16.2%) are foreign citizens, while more than 2 million (24.4%) have immigrant origin (migration.gov.at, September 2021). As such, Austria has attracted the attention of migration scholars. For example, in one of his recent lectures, R. Baubock (2021) noticed that Austria has the most restrictive naturalization policy in the EU. This restrictiveness is reflected in the work of Dunnecker and Cakir (2016), who found that female entrepreneurs of immigrant origin in Vienna usually draw the clear national identity lines between themselves and native Austrians, perceiving their geographic mobility not only as the boundary drawing marker, but also as a qualification and a means of social mobility. The Austrian Statistical Office also provides some statistics on the female/male ratio regarding education and the participation in the country's labor market:

In the group of 25- to 64-year-olds more women (19.9%) than men (16.3%) hold an academic degree. The labor force participation of women has also steadily increased. The employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 years rose from 65.2% (2009) to 69.2% (2019). Yet, the increase in female employment is mostly due to a rise in part-time work. In 2019, 47.7% of employed women worked part-time (2009: 43.1%).

Nevertheless, Eurostat (2019) still finds the gender pay gap in Austria significant: women in Austria earn 19.9% (2019) less than men (EU-27: 14.1%). Thus, as stated at the Austrian

Statistics Office's website, lower incomes and the differences in employment opportunities for women and men ultimately result in women having lower pensions and a higher risk of poverty (*Statistik Austria* 2021 September 9). In addition to these existing inequalities, the Austrian economy has been heavily hit by the pandemic. As stated at the Government's website devoted to migration policies:

In 2020, due to the Covid-19 crises, the Austrian economy suffered a decline of minus 6.6%. GDP at current prices amounted to approximately €375.56 bn (-5.5% in real terms) in 2020 and GDP per inhabitant equaled €42,110. Austria is in the upper sector not only within the EU but world-wide (*Statistik Austria* 2021).

In contrast to Austria, during the whole period of the Cold War, Hungary pursued a planned economy and had strict migration policies of student and professional exchange within COMECON membership in the Socialist bloc. The size of Hungary's population is close to ten million, of which, according to the Hungarian Statistics Office, only about 2% are of a migrant origin.

According to the European Commission (2021), in the beginning of 2018, the number of foreign nationals residing legally and permanently in Hungary was 156,000, this is 1.6% of the country's population. This number increased in 2019 to 180,773 and in the first half of 2020 to 200,150. 65% of the foreigners living in Hungary have come from Europe, mainly from the surrounding countries, such as Ukraine (15.41%), Romania (11%), Germany (9.14%) and Slovakia (5.2%). 26% are from Asia, 3% from Africa and 3.79% from the continent of America (European Commission 2021 March 31).

In the early 1990s, Hungary transformed into a market economy. It became a NATO-member in 1999 and member of the EU in 2004. Following membership in these political and military blocs, Hungary joined the Schengen Agreement in 2008. Bordered on the east and on the south by non-EU (Ukraine, Serbia) and non-Schengen (Croatia, Romania) countries, Hungary is the first Schengen country with a large number of third country nationals. Due to the migration crisis that peaked in the summer of 2015, the Hungarian government organized anti-immigrant campaigns, including building fences at the borders with Serbia, Croatia, and Romania (Biro-Nagy 2021). It also became one of most vocal opponents of the EU migration policy (Tepavcevic 2021).

5.1. Post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigration to Austria

Due to Bilateral Agreements on temporary/guest laborers between Austria and the former Yugoslavia, many immigrants from former Yugoslavia worked in Austria much before

the wars of Yugoslavia's dissolution in the 1990s (Kraler 2011). During the outbreak of violent conflicts in Yugoslavia, migration flows from the war-torn regions to Austria increased dramatically during the 1990s. Most immigrants stayed in Austria and became naturalized. As a (rather unanticipated) result of these migration flows, post-Yugoslavs represent the second largest (after Turks) immigrant group in Austria, while post-Soviets are a much smaller immigrant group in Austria. Among former Yugoslavs, citizens of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia are most numerous, followed by (Northern) Macedonians. Since 2013, when Croatia joined the EU, Croatian citizens who migrated to Austria have been included in Austrian migration statistics as the EU citizens although, along with Romanian and Bulgarian citizens, Austria as an older EU member has kept certain restrictions on labor migration. Simultaneously, citizens of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Macedonia retained the status of third country nationals, though since 2012 they do not need a visa to enter Schengen-member states for short-term stays (under 90 days).

In contrast to citizens of former Yugoslavia, a visa for the former Soviet citizens has always been required for any type of travel to Austria. From the online survey, participant observation of social network groups, and several in-depth interviews, I found that Austria had always attracted former Soviet citizens and migrants for many different reasons. In general, in the late 1980s, Soviet citizens who came to Austria were mostly professionals, working in international organizations located in Vienna. Alternatively, they were staff in Soviet state representative offices. Later, in the 1990s, these were mainly Chechen refugees, and ambitious post-Soviet students, who constituted the first wave of post-Soviet immigration to Austria. The second wave of post-Soviet immigration to Austria (2000-2010) was composed mostly of highly-skilled post-Soviet professionals and business people and their families; the latest wave of post-Soviet immigration to Austria that started in 2014 has been composed of Ukrainian and Russian professionals – labor migrants, marriage migrants, and Ukrainian refugees. The overall number of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria is about 33,000.

5.2. Post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigration to Hungary

In Hungary, migrants from former Yugoslavia represent a small and linguistically diverse group, consisting mostly of the cultural Hungarians from Serbia and Croatia, some refugees from the eastern parts of Croatia – Slavonia and Baranya – Croats, Serbs, and Hungarians respectively. Therefore, while insignificant in numbers – overall less than 10,000, and residing usually for more than a decade in Hungary, many of these immigrants have been fully socially, culturally, and economically integrated into the Hungarian society. Most of them have also obtained Hungarian citizenship.

Post-Soviets are the second largest immigrant group in Hungary – after Romanians/ethnic Hungarians, while post-Yugoslavs are mostly ethnic Hungarians. Among the current immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Hungary, there is a significant number of those, who came as marriage migrants during the existence of the Soviet bloc; other post-Soviet immigrants who came to Hungary back in the Soviet times are either remnants of procurement services of the Southern Soviet troops or the former representatives of Soviet companies.¹ Those who migrated to Hungary starting from 2000 have usually been highly skilled labor migrants with families and small-to-mid-scale businesspersons. The current number of immigrants from the former SU in Hungary is approximately 15000.

Table 1: 20th century - comparison of Yugoslav and Soviet emigration to Austria and Hungary

Horizontal: Host Country/ Immigrant group	Vertical: Host Country/ Immigrant group	Austria – politically neutral, (coordinated) market economy	Hungary – member of the Socialist bloc (planned economy)
(former) Soviets – very limited e/migration due to the Soviet emigration restrictions =>		Temporary work - mostly in international organizations and institutes – high-skilled migrants	Marriage migrants – mostly women; work migrants -high-skilled professionals, army representatives
(former) Yugoslavs – significant migration flows especially to Austria and Germany due to Bilateral Labor Agreements =>		Temporary work – fitting the Piore’s (1979) dual labor market theory = low-skilled <i>versus</i> high-skilled guest-workers (Gast-Arbeiters)	(Almost) absent because of better living standards and higher wages in Yugoslavia in comparison to Hungary

Table 2: 21st century - comparison of former Yugoslav and former Soviet emigration to Austria and Hungary (including obstacles to immigration)

Horizontal: Host Country/ Immigrant group	Vertical: Host Country/ Immigrant group	Austria – visa regime for Non-EU citizens / (coordinated) market economy	Hungary – non-visa regime for former socialist countries / emerging market economy
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¹ Soviet citizens who came to Hungary to provide the Southern Soviet troops with food, education, and entertainment services.

Former Soviet citizens – significant flows – mostly labor migration and search for ‘additional airports’/2 nd homes (‘safe havens’ and softer climate seekers)	Russian, Ukrainian business owners, white-collar and blue-collar workers; students	Ethnic Hungarians from Ukraine – blue-collars; Russians, Ukrainians, Belarussians – students, white-collars, and business entrepreneurs;
Former Yugoslav citizens – significant labor migrations, students	Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian citizens, both white-collars and blue-collars (prevalent), and their families	Ethnic Hungarians and Serbs from Serbia, both white- and blue-collar workers, students

6. Previous global crises and socioeconomic and psychological resilience during COVID-19 pandemic: post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrant experiences in Austria and Hungary

6.1. Post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet Experiences of Global Crises: Lessons in Resilience.

Given the different socio-economic settings in Austria and Hungary, as well as the different sizes and times of formations of the migrant communities in question as described in the previous section, responses received (in various forms) from the representatives of these communities and their testimonies should be read to learn about the emergence and levels of “psychological immunity”. Foulkes (2021: 203) points out that the “stress inoculation” in its milder form “teach us ways to cope. When future stressors arise, we are then more likely to believe they are manageable.” Considering the following comment, it seems that relatively harsh experiences from previous global crises resulted in a relatively strong psychological immunity.

Growing up in a destroyed and devastated country during and after the war formed my worldviews on the pandemic. With regard to the pandemic, my financial situation has not changed; it is much easier to accept the current situation having such experiences from the past (female immigrant from Bosnia in Austria, 18-35 age group).

Simultaneously, this testimony reflects on the effect of previously experienced crises in shaping personal identity. It is also significant that such psychological immunity was considered one of the distinctive features of national identity as the following comment illustrates: “Unfortunately, there are situations much worse than the pandemic, and we Bosnians know it very well” (male immigrant in Austria, 35-50 age group). At the same time, socio-economic factors constitute an essential part in generating psychological immunity:

“Nothing is in scarcity, I have enough of everything (food, flat, WiFi), all what we did not have during the war” (female immigrant from Bosnia in Austria, 35-50 age group).

Similar to their counterparts in Austria, immigrants from former Yugoslavia who reside in Hungary have not expressed extreme stress because of the pandemic. One of the key reasons for such psychological immunity seems to be the possibility to communicate and work remotely.

In contrast to the war, during the pandemic we constantly have had water and electricity, we have had constant channels of communication via Internet platforms, so I kept contact with my family and friends... I spend much more time with my kid, and I became much more productive at work, as there was no need to commute to the office and back (female immigrant from Croatia in Hungary, 35-50 age group).

Finally, in contrast to all other respondents from former Yugoslavia, one female immigrant, who was among the most mature respondents (50-65 age group) and who came to Austria as a refugee responded that she has never experienced any situation similar to the pandemic. She noted that, apart from decreased mobility, the pandemic did not change her life much. Her response also suggests that various types of global crises generate different experiences, but also that perception depends equally on one's personality.

In contrast to the majority of former Yugoslavs, the post-Soviet immigrants in both Austria and Hungary stated that the pandemic is a unique situation for them that they cannot compare to any previous experiences. Only two of 30 survey respondents, residing either in Austria or in Hungary, related their experience from the pandemic with previously experienced global crises.

“I survived all the crises, starting from 1985. I hope that I will survive this crisis too. Our knowledge and skills are our only treasure” (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 50-65 age group).

“In my life there were many worse situations than this pandemic” (female Russian immigrant in Austria, 35-50 age group).

These responses reflect a certain level of psychological immunity. Others' responses reflected on their survival strategies during the pandemic.

“During the lockdowns, I was working all the time, even more than before the pandemic” (female immigrant from Ukraine in Austria, 35-50 age group);

“You learn to do some new things, gaining new skills and professions” (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 35-50 age group);

“The pandemic has had no influence on my life. For me it is merely the possibility to revise my views and habits” (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 35-50 age group);

“I got the vaccine, and I do not have problems with the pandemic” (male Russian immigrant in Austria, 65+ age group).

Talking about resilience strategies, many respondents referred to certain skills obtained before or even during the pandemic.

“Only the skills obtained through pedestrian tourism have been helpful throughout the pandemic” (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 18-35 age);

“I try to keep myself maximally active: I do sports and take courses, I bought a dog” (female immigrant from Ukraine in Hungary, 18-35 age group);

“Looking at the positive side of each situation, taking responsibility for your own mood, health and finances” (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 18-35 age group).

Though most of the immigrants cited above noted that they have not experienced anything similar to COVID-19 pandemic before, they seem to have reacted with resilience throughout the current crisis. On the one hand, this kind of resilience may be interpreted as personal with generational characteristics. On the other hand, it represents the pandemic as a learning experience generating psychological immunity. These findings are summarized in Table 3 below.

Lessons from previous global crises applied and learned during COVID-19 pandemic by immigrants in Austria and Hungary

<i>Lessons from previous global crises applied and learned during COVID-19 pandemic by immigrants in Austria and Hungary</i>	<i>18-35 age group</i>	<i>35-50 age group</i>	<i>50-65 age group</i>
<i>Post-Yugoslav female immigrants</i>	<i>Changing job/sector of work,</i>	<i>Attending online courses to gain new skills</i>	<i>Remain calm</i>

	<i>psychological 'reload'</i>		
Post-Soviet female immigrants	<i>Focus on the household, working remotely, remain responsible for own mood, health and finances, doing sports</i>	<i>Remaining physically active, focus on family, increased productivity at work</i>	<i>Increasing online communication</i>

6.2. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants in Austria and Hungary

“The pandemic didn’t change my financial situation. I find it relatively easy to accept the situation with the pandemic having experienced the war” (female immigrant from Bosnia, in Austria since 2001). This answer received from an online survey placed in several immigrant groups on Facebook reflects the essence of most of the responses from post-Yugoslav immigrants in Austria that I received by using the mixed methods of inquiry. Taking alone the results of online surveys, among 60 respondents, about 60% answered that the pandemic did not influence their employment and financial statuses. These respondents were usually middle-level managers of Austrian firms or multinational corporations based in Austria or working in the educational sector. Only five of the 60 respondents reported that they lost their jobs do to the pandemic. As a result, many of them are searching for new jobs through the Austria’s official labor market bureau and as such, they receive minimal financial support from the state. Those employed as blue-collar workers in factories that had to stop working due to pandemic, reported that they also receive state support; while only one reported their return to the country of origin. This case confirms the assumption raised by *The Economist* (2021) that blue-collar migrant workers have been the most heavily affected by the pandemic.

Similarly, prior to the pandemic, most of the respondents were employed in production sites, including agriculture and meat production, cleaning services, and craft, while a relatively significant number were employed in trade (9) and logistics (7). Five respondents reported that they continue to work in medical services and an equal number reported that they work in the education sector. Before the pandemic only three respondents of the survey from this immigrant group in Austria worked in tourism. Furthermore, several respondents noted that their working hours were shorten due to the pandemic, but all pointed out that the pandemic has made their lives even more complex due to not being able to travel back to their home

countries to visit their families. Here is the comment of one of Bosnian immigrants in Austria: “These lockdowns are catastrophic, as I now have to take three-weeks-vacation to spend one week with my parents” (female immigrant in Austria, age 35-50).

Another response received from the majority of the post-Yugoslavs regarding the impact of the pandemic on their lives was that they reduced their expenditures, the majority to non-essentials; others pointed out that they “reduce their spending on everything”. At the same time, some tried to look at the situation with sense of humor, but they also did not hide their stress and concern about the pandemic.

“To me the pandemic seems to have lasted throughout my time in Austria, because going-from-home-to-work-repeat is how my life here looks like... but, of course, we live under the pressure of what tomorrow will bring, we live in uncertainty. Above all, I feel sorry for my kids. They always say that it is a pity that there is the pandemic, so they cannot go out. I wonder whether this pandemic will destroy my kids’ childhood” (male immigrant, age group 18-35).

On the other side of the spectrum, there was one completely positive response: “Quite the contrary to my expectations, I got a job a month before the pandemic and I still work there” (female immigrant in Austria, 18-35 age group).

The online survey placed in the Russian-speaking immigrant groups in Austria resulted in significantly fewer – twenty - responses, which is to be expected given the much smaller size of the post-Soviet Russian-speaking community in Austria in comparison to the post-Yugoslav one. However, the inquiries made through the digital and traditional ethnography, and through the interviews, resulted in similarly rich qualitative data as for the post-Yugoslav migrant group. In this immigrant group, female responses have also prevailed. At the same time, there have been more individual entrepreneurs than in the post-Yugoslav immigrant group.

Immigrants from this group hold positions in economic sectors starting from information technologies (IT), through education, to manufacturing. This suggests that most of the respondents have kept their jobs and the level of salaries during the pandemic. Those who are entrepreneurs or blue-collar workers and were not able to continue their work remotely, received state support during the lockdown. For example, the director of the languages and arts school located in Vienna shared challenges faced in her work during the pandemic:

“Our school works 40% of the pre-pandemic capacity ... it is hard to teach arts or music remotely to kids ... Parents are afraid of the virus. Without the Austrian state support, we would not be able to survive the pandemic” (female immigrant from Russia in Austria, 50-65 age group).

Another respondent framed the pandemic as an opportunity to find a job in another sector of the economy: “I moved to work for another company and to a better position: before the pandemic I worked in tourism as a medium level professional, and now I work in marketing as a top manager” (female immigrant from Russia, 18-35 age group). Similarity to their counterparts from former Yugoslavia, most post-Soviets in Austria reported that during the pandemic the biggest challenge for them was “the ban on air (and other) travel” (female immigrant from Russia, 35-50 age group). Some other respondents found the travel ban difficult because it didn’t allow for “a change in the environment and scenery” (female immigrant from Russia, 18-35 age group). With a couple of important exceptions, the overall impression from the surveys and interviews conducted in Austria among both former Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants of both genders and represented age groups is that during the pandemic their incomes and their socio-economic situations have not significantly changed. Still, the situation seems to influence the psychological impacts of the pandemic only partially.

In Hungary, the pandemic has had greater socio-economic impact on immigrants than in Austria. First, a much higher percentage of respondents from both immigrant groups reported that they either lost their jobs during the pandemic (30% of respondents in Hungary from former Yugoslavia, and 12% among the respondents, who immigrated to Hungary from the former SU), or that they changed the sphere of work or profession (12%). This seems to be the result, as reported in interviews and surveys, that in the pre-pandemic period the majority of them were employed in tourism sector (25% of immigrants from former Yugoslavia and even 36% of their post-Soviet counterparts). This finding extends the general assumption about the negative effect of the pandemic on blue-collar migrant workers to migrant workers in tourism sector.

At the same time, only one of the respondents in Hungary reportedly received financial support from the state. Furthermore, some of immigrants explained that they were negatively affected by the pandemic through their households due to the loss of jobs of their family members:

“My Hungarian husband lost his job in the movie industry temporarily (though the taxes remained the same and there were no compensations or state support), so it was heavily challenging to survive having only my salary” (female immigrant, 18-35 age, Russian, in Hungary since 2012).

Similarly, another female immigrant from Russia to Hungary in 1996, who before the pandemic held a top-manager position in the tourism sector, noted that she was forced to find

an additional job to survive during the pandemic. As a result, she reported that she became a private entrepreneur in a service sector unrelated to tourism.

Simultaneously, the post-Soviet immigrants working in financial (20%), IT (20%) and marketing (4%) sectors as employees of international corporations seem to have been the least affected by the pandemic in socio-economic terms. A similar observation holds true for immigrants from former Yugoslavia in Hungary, who have been working in the IT, education and automotive sectors. None of them reported losing their jobs, nor a change in their social-economic status. On the other hand, some detailed responses reflected that the pandemic has had also a positive impact on the personal lives of some immigrants. “Prior to the lockdown, I met a man that I liked. During the lockdown we moved in together and a couple of months later we got married” (female immigrant from Russia in Hungary, 18-35 age group). Finally, the lockdowns have had a major impact on immigrant households, especially in Hungary. Several families reported the difficulties with remote learning of their kids, while such cases were not reported in Austria. The following quote from an interview with the one of the post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary sheds light on the scale and depth of such a problem. “Despite the teachers’ claims that there will be remote classes during the lockdowns, my kids’ school did not provide them properly for them. The teachers sent homework in emails, and they had some online meetings for 20 minutes once a week. As a result, I spent all of the lockdown teaching my kids. I never studied in Hungarian and I have limited knowledge of this language. That was a nightmare!” (personal communication, May, 2021).

Overall, the most striking difference in terms of socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the two immigrant groups, between responses in Hungary and Austria, is the frequency of state support during the pandemic in Austria, and the lack of it in Hungary. Another striking difference between the two host countries is in the sector of immigrants’ employment: while there are only a few former Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants in Austria, who before the pandemic were employed in the tourism sector, these numbers are significant in Hungary, especially among the post-Soviet immigrants. Finally, the ban on travel and lockdowns seem to have had major negative psychological impacts on both groups of immigrants in Austria and Hungary. These are reflected in the following responses from the online surveys: “Life has changed tremendously, because before the pandemic we traveled a lot: on business trips, vacations, and back home” (female immigrant from Ukraine in Hungary since 2013, 18-35 age group). “The obstacle to traveling home during the year and visits of my family have had a strong negative impact on my psychological condition”

(female immigrant, 18-35 age, Russian, in Hungary since 2012). Tables 4 and 5 summarize these findings.

Table 4: Impact of COVID-19 on post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants in Austria

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants in Austria	18-35 age group	35-50 age group	50-65 age group
Post-Yugoslav immigrants	Less travel, change of jobs, migration abroad, change of profession and the job type	Less travel, less contacts with friends and family, loss of job	Less travel, anxiety
Post-Soviet immigrants	Less travel, limited access to the vaccines due to age group	Less travel, loss of job, obstacle to send remittances to war torn zones	Less travel, less contacts with friends and family

Table 5: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants in Hungary	18-35 age group	35-50 age group	50-65 age group
Post-Yugoslav immigrants	Loss of jobs, suffering from isolation	Less travel, less contacts with friends and family, feeling isolated, and problems with home-schooling of children during the lockdowns	Temporary loss of job, decreased travel

Post-Soviet immigrants	Less travel and the related negative psychological impact	Less travel, loss of jobs, the lack of adequate Hungarian language skills for home-schooling during the lockdowns	Less travel, less contacts with friends and family
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6.3.Retained vulnerabilities

While the pandemic has had generally, negative impact on immigrants’ emotions mostly due to travel bans and less social contacts, the loss of jobs negatively affects their psychological wellbeing almost by default. Several particularly bitter responses came from both immigrant groups and both from Austria and Hungary. These responses were from people who lost their jobs during the pandemic, and either had to go back to their home country, or were ‘downgraded’ compared to their pre-pandemic employment and/or social status. “I lost my job and returned to Bosnia... you will die, so will I” (male, former immigrant from Bosnia in Austria, 50-65 age group). Such visible desperation and pessimism may also be related to fewer opportunities for finding a (new) job due to age, or a reliable source of income during the pandemic.

Finally, some responses demonstrated a severe mistrust and attraction to widespread conspiracies concerning the spread of COVID-19 and the role of vaccines – all captured in the concept of ‘infodemic’. Here are the most striking examples:

“This is a catastrophic manipulation of human lives” (male, former immigrant from Bosnia in Austria, 50-65 age group);

“If there really was a pandemic it would not have such a strong impact on my brain. This seems like butchering sheep before killing them” (female immigrant, 18-35 age group, in Austria since 2016). These comments demonstrate that despite the experiences with previous global crises, many retain psychological vulnerability and – though being aware - remain prone to influences of the infodemic.

7. Conclusions: (Un)Learned Resilience?

The analysis provided in this paper leads to several important conclusions on both the theoretical and practical levels. On the theoretical level, probably the most obvious conclusion is that the current COVID-19 pandemic represents transformation in both Polanyi’s meanings: while in the beginning it prompted people to change their daily routines and jobs, in the long-

term, the pandemic prompted changes in life styles, habits, and even in worldviews. Still, these changes are varied depending on at least three factors: first the immigrants' socio-economic circumstances prior to and during the pandemic; second, the extent of their psychological immunity developed during previous global crises; and third, their own personalities. Foulkes (2021) writes that, in contrast to mild stress that generates psychological immunity, high stress results in psychological vulnerability: this seems to happen with those immigrants who worked as blue-collar workers, and who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Confirming Foulkes' finding, others, who were less severely exposed to the pandemic in socio-economic terms, demonstrated a relatively high level of resilience. Therefore, the findings here suggest that the socio-economic aspects of the crisis are significant, though not decisive influences on the psychological resilience to the crisis.

In terms of assumptions proposed by the existing literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants, this paper provides several important contributions. First, based on the analysis of impact of COVID-19 on post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet immigrants in Austria and Hungary, it concludes that the re-migration of white-collar workers to countries of origin and the emergence of a 'grey-economy' are rather individual cases, and do not emerge as a trend observed by *The Economist* (2021). However, this conclusion is limited to the study of two immigrant groups in two relatively small EU countries. Thus, further inquiry in the same and other immigrant groups is required for testing this assumption.

Second, the findings here provide an interesting contribution to the assumption that migration changes people's identities, including the national one: the analysis demonstrates that global crises shape various types of identities but significantly national identities through the forms and ways in which they affect people of a particular country in a particular period. Here I refer mostly to the notion of "we Bosnians know that the pandemic is not the worst".

Another novelty this paper provides for the literature on COVID-19 and EU and Hungarian migration policies/practitioners is that in Hungary before the pandemic many immigrants worked in tourism and the hospitality sector, so during the pandemic most of them lost their jobs temporarily, or had to switch to work in another sector. This finding points not only to relatively strong reliance of the Hungarian economy on tourism, but also serves as a remainder about the vulnerability of this sector to crises in terms of type and scale.

Moving to more general implications concerning the role of state in social protection during such an unprecedented global crisis - the differences between Austria and Hungary in this socio-political realm becomes striking. Though not particularly analyzed in this paper, to use Polanyi's terms again, the counter-movement between state and market for social protection seems to be much better articulated in the Austrian system than in the Hungarian

one. Learning from better (if not good) practices and further cooperation on the EU level concerning resilience in crises and their potential prevention would be a desirable avenue for EU policy-makers.

Last, but not least, the major conclusion is that entrepreneurship in the form of self-employment emerges as a socio-economic response and resilient strategy not only in the process of immigration and integration to the new environment, but also as the response to changes in environment and crises. While this finding extends and reinforces the assumption about immigrant entrepreneurship as the key socio-economic strategy for immigration and integration (Mesch and Csamakski, 1997; Zueva, 2005), it also should be reconsidered as one of the strategies for socio-economic recovery from the global crises on both local and global levels.

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