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CHANGING GEOGRAPHY, RETAINING THE MENTALITY: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF POST-SOVIET IMMIGRANTS IN HUNGARY AND AUSTRIA

ABSTRACT

The article explores the relationship between social and economic aspects of the integration of Soviet immigrants in Hungary and Austria. Relying on the analysis of narratives collected through digital ethnography, the article describes paths of integration of former Soviet citizens in Hungary and Austria. The article reveals that Russian-speaking communities usually provide the first instance of social integration. They remain a major channel for economic integration via entrepreneurship for many immigrants. Along with these findings, the article develops a concept of a culture-based immigrant community – as opposed to an ethnic one – contributing in this way also to the literature on migrations.

KEYWORDS: Social and economic integration, post-Soviet immigrants and communities, Hungary, Austria, culture-based immigrant communities

1. INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 21st century, Europe faced two parallel and opposite processes: the first was the demise of the Socialist bloc and several countries that it constituted, including the Soviet Union (SU). This demise generated mass migration outflows from the former world power [Nikolko and Carment eds, 2017]. As the OECD statistics on global migration indicate, most of these post-Soviet migrations have been westward: as a result, immigrants who originate from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan have created relatively large Russian-speaking communities in the United States of America (USA) [Ryazantsev, 2015], Canada [Shvarts, 2010], Germany [Ryazantsev, 2017] and Great Britain [Byford, 2012]. Consequently, Soviet geographical origins and a native level knowledge of the Russian language placed the post-Soviet emigres within a coherent and often ethnically diverse migrant group [Tepavcevic, 2020a].

The second process that Europe faced at the turn of the 21st century was the integration of the European Economic Community into the political bloc – the

European Union (EU). After the two significant EU enlargements – one in 1995, integrating Austria, Finland, and Sweden, and another in 2004, integrating ten countries, including Hungary - the political integration of the EU has been heavily challenged: the migration crisis that peaked in 2015 brought thousands of refugees from the Middle East to the EU. This generated deep disagreements among the EU member states over integration policies in general, and over third countries nationals (TCNs) immigrant quota, and resulted in the Brexit referendum. Among the remaining 27 EU member states, the governments of Hungary 1 and Austria 2 have been among vocal opponents of the EU-level migration policy. Thus, in response to the EU challenge in improving social inclusion of the TCNs, in 2016 the Commission of the European Parliament issued the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy 3 of the EU: this integration model is built around the idea of self-sustaining immigrant employment, assuming that social and economic integration of TCNs in the EU go hand-in-hand.

In addition violent conflict in Ukraine since 2014 generated a significant wave of migrants to the EU. In turn, post-Soviet communities emerged as one of the largest groups of TCNs in the EU [IOM Report, 2020]. As Nikolko and Carment point out,

post-Soviet diasporas are an increasingly important area of research because they are at the nexus of an evolving social landscape that is fundamentally altering the manner in which post-Soviet countries relate to one another and they to the West. To be sure, migration from Eastern to Western Europe is an important aspect of this relationship, but culture and day-to-day experiences also have a crucial effect on these political and economic developments [2017: 164].

Addressing this EU integration concept on the example of the post-Soviet diasporas, the present article explores the relationship between social and economic aspects of integration of the former Soviet immigrants in Hungary and Austria. The inquiry is led by the following questions: What are the channels of integration of post-Soviet citizens in Hungary and Austria? In what ways and to what extent are the social and economic aspects interrelated in the integration of post-Soviet citizens in these two EU member states?

1 The country bordering on the East and on the South with non-EU states, thus being the first Schengen country to a large number of TCNs. Due to migration crisis, Hungarian government organized anti-immigrant campaigns, including building the wall on the border instead of boarded with Serbia and Romania; about 2% of population are immigrants.

2 Market economy and military neutral since 1955, EU member since 1995; about 20% of population are immigrants

3 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions. Action Plan on the integration of the third countries nationals. European Commission, Brussels, 7.G.2016

Based on digital ethnography, including monitoring of specialized Russian-language media, surveys of post-Soviet immigrants, and in-depth interviews with post-Soviet immigrants and entrepreneurs residing in Hungary and Austria, the article reveals that in most cases post-Soviet Russian-speaking communities in both host countries provide the first instance of social integration. At the same time, for the newcomers, these communities remain a frequent channel for economic integration via entrepreneurship. In addition to these findings, following the narratives of post-Soviet citizens in Hungary and Austria, the article develops a concept of culture-based immigrant communities.

The next section reviews the assumptions about the patterns of integration proposed by the scholarly literature on migrations in general and the post-Soviet migrants in particular. The third section briefly describes the research design and methods of inquiry. The fourth section analyzes the narratives of post-Soviet immigrants about the integration patterns in Hungary and Austria. Based on the analysis provided in the fourth section, the last section develops the concept of the culture-based immigrant community and concludes.

2. PATTERNS OF IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION IN HOST SOCIETIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly literature on migration presents varying claims explaining factors that influence the processes of integration and self-sustainability of immigrant groups, ranging from the influence of partnerships among the local structures, such as the local employment centres, language schools and agencies [Dijkstra, 2001; Joppke, 2007] to deployed national practices of language acquisition containing the exposure of immigrants to the socio-cultural environment of the host country. Similarly, Kontos [2003] finds that ethnic entrepreneurship serves for constructing a collective identity of immigrants within the host country, that gives privileged access to the resources. In turn, the more discrimination a community faces, the tighter becomes the community and the more support it has from the inside [Kontos, 2003].

Furthermore, Piore [1979] builds up the dual-labour-market theory focusing on patterns of integration of immigrant workers into labour markets of receiving countries: on the supply side, primary market workers emerged with increased unionizations, while secondary labourers are constantly being recruited. Moreover, by focusing on the USA, Light [1984] finds that immigrants' disadvantage in the labour market of a host country and immigrant groups' values are among the most important motives that encourage immigrants' business enterprise. In contrast, more recent studies demonstrate that several people from emerging market-countries immigrate to developed economies with considerable

savings: by investing these savings into small or medium businesses, these immigrants receive resident permits for themselves and their families [Rath, 200G; Kuznetsov, 2007]. In sum, most of the literature on migrations and immigrant entrepreneurship depicts immigrant integration as a complex process containing mutually enforcing social and economic aspects, while some works also tie the legal and cultural aspects to the process.

2.1. Integration of Post-Soviet Immigrants in Host Societies

Within post-Soviet migrations studies, post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship has already been recognized as a significant emerging field of research [Tepavcevic, 2020a]. Regarding the patterns of integration, this field proposes two opposing and two complementing propositions about the role of immigrant entrepreneurship in the integration of post-Soviet immigrants in host countries.

The first proposition is based on the aforementioned disadvantage theory initially proposed by Light [1984]. For example, Mesch and Czamanski [1997] explored integration strategies of the early post-Soviet emigres in Haifa, Israel, where they were territorially concentrated: they find that immigrants become interested in entrepreneurship after learning that their prospects of finding a job in their profession are meagre, and explained their motivation to open a small business as a way to increase their income. This finding points towards the economic aspect of integration. Similarly, Zueva [2005] points out that some of the Russian-speaking immigrants in Hungary founded companies and became entrepreneurs mostly to obtain residency permits, so entrepreneurship was their integration adaptive mechanism in legal terms.

The second proposition, on the contrary, underlines the advantages of entrepreneurship in the host country as the major motive for immigration, but also as only one of many channels of integration. Exploring Russian entrepreneurs, who set up their business in London, Vershinina [2012] demonstrated that their businesses were not aimed at the enclave economy with reliance on co-ethnic migrant customers: instead, their entrepreneurial activity in London was influenced by the transnational nature of their social and professional networks [Vershanina, 2012]. In a similar vein, Tepavcevic [2013] reveals the existence of several associations of post-Soviet Russian-speaking innovators entrepreneurs in Germany and found that many of them immigrated during the 1990s in a search for finances to develop their technical innovations.

The third proposition, conditionally marked as culture-based, complements both previously discussed, disadvantage and advantage propositions about motives for immigrant entrepreneurship. For example, Tepavcevic [2013] demonstrates that some of the joint efforts of Russian-speaking scientists and entrepreneurs residing in various EU member states turned successful in receiving

the EU grants to further develop their innovative ideas. Furthermore, Rodgers et al. [2018] suggest that forms of social capital that are based on the use of the Russian language and legacies of the Soviet past are as significant as the role of co-ethnic and co-migrants' networks in facilitating the development of post-Soviet migrants' entrepreneurship and businesses. Similarly, Ryazantsev [2017] built the theory of the Russian-language migrant economies by finding that over the last two decades, Russian citizens who organized businesses abroad tend to employ other Russian and Russian-speaking former Soviet citizens abroad, mostly in tourism and trade industries: this usually happened in Southern Asian and some African countries, where Russians and other post-Soviets have little possibilities for cultural and economic integration [Ryazantsev, 2017].

Last, but not least a fourth proposition appears in the two relatively recent works. First, by tracing the post-Soviet immigrant entrepreneurship back to the Cold War era, Shvarts [2010] and Tepavcevic [2017] reveal considerable differences in patterns of post-Soviet entrepreneurship depending mostly on the time of their arrival to Canada and Hungary, finding Russian language economy significant mostly in the 1990s. Second, Ryazantsev et al. [2018] conceptualize post-Soviet emigrations into "the three new waves" [94] and relate them to the types of Russian migrant entrepreneurship. These findings point toward the significance of the time of immigration on the pattern of integration in a host society.

In sum, the scholarly discussions about immigrants' integration in host societies generate two competing and two complementing propositions about the integration of post-Soviet immigrants in host societies: disadvantage theory *versus* advantage thesis, common-culture-based community integration process, and time-dependent pattern of integration. These propositions are tested in the empirical section below.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY

Following the time frame of post-Soviet emigration waves proposed by Ryazantsev et al. [2018], and to reach the understanding of the integration processes as complete as possible, I contacted and analyzed representatives of each migration wave in Hungary and Austria. Given that the immigration from the Soviet Union to Hungary was much more frequent than the one to Austria, and that the first wave (not only individual cases of) immigration of (former) Soviet citizens to Austria started only after the collapse of the SU [Tepavcevic, 2020b], my first focus was on Hungary, and then my methods and findings were extrapolated to Austria.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I collected data through several short research travels both in Hungary and Austria, and personally meeting my

informants I conducted in-depth interviews. After the outbreak of the pandemic, I continued to conduct in-depth interviews online by using all available applications. I also extensively turned to digital ethnography collecting the narratives through participant observation of social networks discussions. Some of the statistical information I collected from the official sources, such as Migration Offices of Hungary and Austria, but also through online surveys that I situated in social networks' immigrant groups.

I have also conducted traditional ethnographic research: in my everyday life, I join various immigrant social groups. As 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 SU, and I am embedded in these communities. Such a position provides me with genuine insights into the post-Soviet communities across the EU and the globe through the participant observation of the social networks, such as Facebook. I join various social network groups and actively participate in discussions. I also follow Russian-language social and traditional media, and analyze the content, with a special focus on migrants' vlogs on YouTube. To learn about the experiences on certain topics, I created online questionnaires and ask members of the relevant social networks' groups to respond.

Regarding the ethical and legal aspects of the research, due to the sensitivity of the research topic and following the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) I have chosen my informants based on the three principles: first, I recruited them on a purely voluntary basis, second, they all were older than 18, and third, I kept their data anonymous. In this way, I collected narratives from over thirty respondents, fifteen in each country. In the following section, some of the most illustrative narratives are quoted and analyzed.

4. PATTERNS OF INTEGRATION OF THE (POST-)SOVIET IMMIGRANTS IN HUNGARY AND AUSTRIA

Table 1 indicates how the narratives received from various research methods have been referred to in this section.

Table 1: Methods of collection of the narratives referred in the text

| Method of research | Reference in the text |
|---|--|
| Face-to-face interview | personal interview, a time when conducted |
| Interview conducted via telephone | telephone interview, a time when conducted |
| Interview conducted via email, or some of the online applications | online conversation, a time when conducted |
| Traditional and digital ethnography - Participant observation of Russian-speaking immigrant communities and virtual immigrant groups in social networks (informal presence and conversations) | personal communication, a time when occurred |

4.1. Narratives about the integration of post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary

Among the current immigrants from the former SU 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 remnant of procurement services of the Southern Soviet troops or the former representatives of the Soviet companies. Those who migrated to Hungary starting from 2000 have usually been highly-skilled labour migrants with families and small-to-mid-scale business persons. The current number of immigrants from the former SU in Hungary is about 15000. This is how one of my

informants, who moved to Hungary while it was part of the Soviet bloc, describes her integration into the Hungarian society:

„I live here since 1983... I married a Hungarian, who studied in St. Petersburg ... coming to another country I knew that I have to learn Hungarian as soon as possible, so I went to the language courses... To practice my new language skills, I was approaching people on the street to ask whatever I needed – where is this or that address, how can I get to a certain place and alike... I made friends ...Back then, there were a lot of Hungarians, who studied in the Soviet Union and returned to Hungary, so it was possible to find a job even without knowledge of the Hungarian language... everyone spoke Russian there... I got a salary higher than my husband, who is Hungarian” (an immigrant from Russia, telephone interview, April, 2020).

This citation demonstrates also that for the citizens of the countries participating in the Soviet bloc the labour markets of other bloc members' countries were open and socially inclusive mostly because of the use of Russian as a common language. Similarly, the following citation also reveals that the close economic ties among the members of the Soviet bloc facilitated migrations between them and the integration of those, who migrated.

„My husband and I came to Hungary as employees of the Soviet-Hungarian joint company “Energotechna” ... There was a transformation of the system both in Russia, and here in Hungary, and everything fell apart ... We decided to stay for some more time, and we established our company” (immigrant from Russia, personal interview, November 2017).

This citation demonstrates that the situation in Hungary at least by my informant was perceived to some extent similar to the SU. Furthermore, among my acquaintances, there are many, who came to Hungary at an early age following their mothers, who married Hungarians.

„I came to Hungary when I was seven. My mom married a Hungarian, who worked in the Soviet Union, and we moved with him to the Hungarian province. She is a chemist and she immediately got a job in a local factory. I started school and learned Hungarian quite quickly. ... In the 1980s, I moved to Budapest to study ... I never could become a Hungarian because of the Hungarians: they were constantly teasing me because I am Russian ... When I graduated, I got a job in a Russian logistics company and I travelled a lot between Hungary, Russia and Ukraine” (immigrant from Ukraine, personal communication, May 2020).

This citation demonstrates that, despite immigrating to Hungary as a child, some immigrants from the former SU have never felt completely socially integrated: this seems to have some influence on their further employment. Similarly, as the two following citations demonstrate, both employment and entrepreneurship of post-Soviet immigrants in a certain way have been related to their origins.

„I did not want to move from Russia, but I had no choice because my mom married Hungarian and we moved here. I grew up and studied here... my husband is Hungarian ... I work for the tourist agency owned by the Russians. Most of my colleagues and close friends are also coming from the former USSR... most of us are fluent in Hungarian” (an immigrant from Russia, personal communication, February, 2020).

„I was born in Budapest, and I grew up here... I study in the Hungarian college... I always felt different from Hungarians... my closest friends are also from Russian-speaking families, their parents all came from the Soviet Union to Hungary... we all met at the (Orthodox – author) Church’s school ... my first job was an interpretation from Hungarian to Russian” (an immigrant from Russia, personal communication, September, 2020).

This citation reveals that even some individuals, who were born after the collapse of the SU in Hungary feel related with the SU through their parents. Last, but not least, the following citation confirms this significance of the immigrants’ self-perceived mentality dimension of the integration processes.

„I came to Hungary when I was eleven. My step-father was Hungarian. So, I went to school here and I grew up among the Hungarians. I did not see many differences between myself and the Hungarians. ... But when I started my graduate studies, I met people from Russia and Ukraine, and I felt this Slavic mentality so much closer to me. I felt as if I rediscovered myself ... I am a Soviet kid, we never owned a home... Now, in Hungary, I own an apartment, but for me, it is still unimaginable that I own the home that I live in” (immigrant from Ukraine, personal interview, January 2020).

As this citation reveals, in addition to the feeling of distance from the Hungarian mentality, the scarcity of material resources is an important reference to being a ‘Soviet’, while immigration to Hungary for my informant is associated with relief from poverty. Overall, my observations have revealed that even some (post-Soviet) immigrants, who were born and grew up in Hungary have never felt completely socially integrated into the Hungarian society, and that they retained the feeling of belonging to the Soviet community; that in many aspects coincides with Anderson’s (1991) concept of ‘imagined community’ applied to the context of the immigrant group. In cases of post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary, being ‘Soviet’ has a social connotation of being mentally different from the Hungarians, while in other cases this has an economic connotation, meaning mostly being poor.

Nevertheless, most of my informants seem to be embedded into the Hungarian society, whether through the family, work, or studies, while retaining strong social and economic connections with their former compatriots also living in Hungary, and sometimes with their countries of origin. My observations to some extent also

reveal that both - Hungary's membership in the Soviet bloc, and subsequent political and economic reforms in the early 1990s - have played a crucial role in both social and economic integration of former Soviet citizens in Hungary and resulted in social and economic embeddedness of their communities.

4.2. Narratives about the integration of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria

In contrast to Hungary, a visa for the former Soviet citizens has always been required for any type of travel to Austria. From participant observation of social networks' groups and the interviews, I found that Austria had always attracted former Soviet citizens and migrants for several various reasons. In general, in the late 1980s, Soviet citizens coming to Austria were mostly professionals, working in international organizations located in Vienna, or staff of the Soviet's state's representative offices; 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 was composed mostly of post-Soviet highly-skilled professionals, and business persons, and it took place between 2000 and 2010; the latest wave of post-Soviet immigration to Austria has been composed of Ukrainian and Russian professionals – labour migrants, marriage migrants, and Ukrainian refugees. The overall number of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria is about 33000. Nevertheless, each migrant experience has had its' individual path.

„As the Soviet Jews, we were allowed to emigrate in the early 1980s, so we moved to Israel believing that we'll be in majority there...However, in Israel we faced divisions between the European and non-European Jews ...to avoid such divisions, in the late 1980s as Israeli citizens, we moved further to Vienna, because we had a lot of relatives here. At the same time, the climate, friends, relatives – everything was much closer to us here in Austria, than in Israel” (immigrant from Tajikistan, telephone interview, March 2020).

„I was about 22, so I already came with a certain mentality, so it was difficult to learn how to behave in this environment. ... I came without knowledge of German: among foreign languages I spoke only English. Here I knew only my cousin, who invited me here. She made an invitation for me and provided me with some support in the very beginning” (immigrant from Kazakhstan, online conversation, February, 2020)

As these citations demonstrate, most of the early post-Soviet immigrants in Austria started their integration through contacts with their compatriots. Simultaneously, regardless of the time of their arrival in Austria, all of my informants faced some types of obstacles in the legal aspect of the integration process.

„Austrians have very strong protection of their labour market. So, the priority is given to Austrians and the EU citizens. Specialists from third countries are a secondary choice. Overall, there is a possibility to get a position! Our – post-Soviet people’s - advantage in comparison to Austrians is our hunger” (immigrant from Kazakhstan, online conversation, February, 2020).

Though not related exactly to entrepreneurship, the comment from my informant refers to the disadvantages that TCNs in the Austrian labour market face by default. In this way, the disadvantage theory, whose major proponents have been Light [1984] and Portes [1997] extends from immigrant entrepreneurship to immigrant employment. It is also significant that similarly to my informants from Hungary, my informant from Austria also refers to the Soviet people as ‘ours’ and also mentions an aspect of poverty, in this case, ‘hunger’ as the common feature of this group. Simultaneously, based on their own experiences, my informants demonstrate the importance of social and economic integration for other aspects of integration.

„In the beginning, I was earning money as a street musician. That is how I met some very nice people, and later I met a wonderful Austrian family, who practically adapted me. I was extremely lucky because they took me to their home, and because I could live there peacefully and I did not have to pay flat rents. As a result, I could study quietly and to save some money. Therefore, my integration was quite smooth” (immigrant from Kazakhstan, online conversation, February, 2020).

This citation reveals that the social aspect of the integration is not necessarily tied to the economic one. Simultaneously, the following citation demonstrates that economic integration paves the way to legal integration.

„When I started to work at the shop, my boss hired a good lawyer, who made all the paperwork for me. I received a visa in one month, while usually that process takes 6 months ... My younger brother also worked with me. And after six years of working in that company, I and my brother decided to open our own jewellery shop” (immigrant from Tajikistan, telephone interview, March 2020).

Similarly, some of my informants built their customer basis mostly from their former compatriots.

„Austrians are very conservative if compared to Russians. Most of my clients – 95% – are men from the former Soviet Union. ... They were raised in a very different way than Austrians, in society and ideology where everyone was equal” (immigrant from Russia, personal interview, February 2020).

This citation simultaneously demonstrates first, that despite the length of their stay in Austria, people raised in the former SU retain the identity of their ‘Soviet-

ness'; second, they also tend to exploit the demand of these post-Soviet communities and serve their needs by capitalizing on mobility as an additional qualification reflected in their bicultural skills [Light 1984; Portes 1997; Dunnecker and Cakir, 2016].

On the other side of the spectrum, some of my informants talked about applying their education and qualifications as a major motive to become entrepreneurs.

„I came to Austria because my husband is Austrian ... Austria also provides many wonderful possibilities for all types of education ...I am not the first generation of pedagogues in my family, I have been working in that sphere for a long time and I am very interested in pedagogy. ... The school is how I see myself currently. To me, it is ...an international and interdisciplinary approach to education ... but my integration in Austria happened mostly through my family” (an immigrant from Russia, online communication, March 2020).

As this citation displays, my informant took advantage of both her education and mobility and combined them to establish the language and art school. This finding goes in a line with Tepavcevic [2013] argument stating that post-Soviet immigrants build their entrepreneurship based on advantages existing in host countries. Among this newest wave of the post-Soviet immigrants in Austria, there are Ukrainian citizens, for whom the war in Ukraine was the turning point in the decision to leave the home country, though not necessarily as refugees.

„When the war in Ukraine started, I moved to Germany, and there I started to work in the recruitment sector ... I met my husband there. But I completely disliked Germany, and we decided ... that we'll go together to Austria ...I started to learn the language when we still were in Germany, I was still working for the recruitment company. And here, in Austria, I continued to develop my recruiting company” (immigrant from Ukraine, personal conversation, February, 2020).

Still, post-Soviet immigrants of the most recent wave find the Austrian society relatively hostile.

„The Austrian society is highly sterile, highly class-based. There are ... divisions between the people based on 'ours' and 'others'. If you haven't gone to kindergarten, high school, or university here, the chances to be accepted into various social groups are very low, except if you integrate with other expats, who, like myself, moved here relatively recently” (immigrant from Ukraine, personal interview, February 2020).

Having similar impressions, another informant, coming recently from Ukraine, has been integrating in Austria almost solely through the post-Soviet Russian-speaking communities.

„What made me depressed is that there were few Russian speakers – at least it seemed to me that there are few of them. Now I know where to look for them ... I became a member of a Russian-speaking female society (founded to help with) integration in Austria ... everyone works voluntarily. This helps me to build the networks to gain more pupils for my classes, as that is the best advertisement... people start to recognize me and then they contact me to provide private classes for their kids. And I provide private Russian language classes and actor-master classes at home... I met my employers only when I applied for a job. They are from Russia. I did not have any contact with them before, and I did not know anything about them before I met them. I work with them and they are satisfied, so am I” (immigrant from Ukraine, personal interview, February 2020).

Thus, this citation confirms the proposition Shvarts [2010] and Tepavcevic [2017], that the patterns of economic integration and the type of post-Soviet entrepreneurship in host countries are time-dependent [Shvarts, 2010; Tepavcevic, 2017]. At the same time, they also extend Kontos [2003] statement, that ethnic entrepreneurship serves for constructing a collective identity of immigrants within the host country.

Furthermore, I learned from my informant, that despite migrating based on her marriage to an Austrian, that the set of social networks different from those that she used in Ukraine, were major channels of her social and economic integration in Austria.

„Here people use completely different social networks, and I was completely unfamiliar with most of them. So, I had to register on Facebook and to learn how it functions. I was looking for a job, and I found the pages, where people publish their job offers ... My husband works constantly ... Being constantly between the four walls was boring, and going somewhere alone was scary. And I found the social organization of Russian speakers. There were many people from Donetsk, so it was very pleasing that there are people, who completely understand my problems. Among them there were people, who arrived here as refugees ... my employers are from Russia. ...I work with them and they are satisfied, so am I” (immigrant from Ukraine, personal interview, February 2020).

Overall, the narratives of post-Soviet immigrants in Austria demonstrate that Austria's migration policies and the attitudes of the local societies towards the migrants led to certain segregation at least of post-Soviet immigrant communities. This finding to some extent goes in the line with Ryazantsev [2017] theory of Russian-speaking migrant economies, but it also confirms Tepavcevic [2017]

proposition that the level and extent of integration of post-Soviet migrants depends on the time of immigration to host countries. Similar to their Hungarian counterparts, post-Soviet immigrants in Austria refers to belonging to the Soviet culture, and generate the post-Soviet culture-based immigrant community in Austria through their Russian-speaking social and economic networks. The next section further elaborates on this concept and concludes.

5. COMMON CULTURE-BASED POST-SOVIET IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES: CONCLUSIONS

The findings represented in the analysis above lead to several important conclusions. First, though post-Soviet immigrants in Hungary and Austria seem to be nationally and ethnically defined as Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, or Kazakhs, their narratives have demonstrated that their networks create culturally distinctive post-Soviet immigrant communities: most of them referred to themselves as being Soviet: “Soviet children/childhood, “our - Soviet”, “we – the Soviet people” and even in one case referred in another work “us - *Homo-Sovieticus*” [Tepavcevic, 2020b: 47]. The vast majority of them share the mentality - similar world views mostly based on poverty, and certain social equality in such poverty - experienced in home countries in the Soviet past. For most of them, immigration to the West meant the search for better living standards and opportunities. Still, after they migrated, they tend to look for their compatriots and other former Soviet citizens to comfort themselves in host environments, where they have extensively used the Russian language both in the social and economic spheres of their lives. As a result, and as the second important conclusion, former Soviet and Russian-speaking communities serve as the first channel of social and economic integration, especially for relatively recent immigrants from the former Soviet countries. This argument coincides with Rodgers et al. [2018], who found that social capital based on the use of the Russian language and legacies of the Soviet past equally facilitate their business and entrepreneurship as co-ethnic and co-migrants’ networks.

Nevertheless, there are certainly important differences between post-Soviet culture-based immigrant communities in Hungary and Austria. As some of the cited narratives have demonstrated, immigrants from the former SU in Hungary shared some of the perceived economic difficulties from the Soviet bloc with the local Hungarians. As a result, though feeling different from Hungarians, they do not feel excluded from the mainstream society in Hungary. Regarding the post-Soviet immigrant community in Austria, this seems not to be the case. As some of the narratives strikingly reveal, despite the positive perceptions of Austria in general, most of my informants expressed the feeling of being excluded from the Austrian mainstream society, be it legally – struggling with legal barriers,

economically – struggling to enter the Austrian labour market competing with the locals and other immigrants – EU citizens, or socially – trying to make friendships with the Austrians. In certain cases, it seems that such perception of social exclusion was based on the feeling of economic inferiority *vis-à-vis* the Austrians, and it was followed by improving the social and professional skills, such as registering to a different set of online social networks and learning how to use them.

Therefore, these findings suggest that, opposite to the concepts of ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic’ migrant entrepreneurs as it usually used in the migration literature to “indicate the geographic origin of the migrants” [nDoen et al., 1998: 2], the post-Soviet migrants and entrepreneurs have the common mentality. Therefore, when Hungary and Austria are concerned as host countries, the post-Soviet immigrants represent the culture-based migrant communities.

Last but not least, it is important to notice that my findings are based on the inquiry into groups of immigrants from the former SU in Hungary and Austria. Although these communities are diverse and increasing, to test the concept of the culture-based post-Soviet communities, these findings should be extrapolated to the research of integration of immigrant groups from the former SU in other EU member states and beyond, and their role in the integration of these immigrants in their host countries.

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