

Working paper

Migrations and informality

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1 Introduction

Although informality seems to be present in all societies, the post-socialist region has proved an especially fertile ground for studying it (Polese *et al.*, 2016: 183). This case study explores the interaction between south-eastern European (SEE) migration and informal/formal practices, with a focus on several countries: Albania, Kosovo, Slovenia and Serbia. We focus on informal practices of migrants from these countries, especially, following Ledeneva's dictum of concentrating on "what works", "know-how", and "ways of getting things done", or as Keith Hart conveniently summarises it in a phrase, "what people generate out of the circumstances of their everyday life" (2006: 25).

More to the point, we concentrate on implicit rules, thus following Žižek who argues that to know a society "is not only to know its explicit rules. One should also know *how to apply these rules*: when to use them or not use them; when to violate them; when not to use a choice that is offered; when to recognize one's obligation to do something but pretend one is doing it as a free choice" (2011: 165). Perhaps a more succinct formulation of this would be Durkheim's famous statement that "in a contract not everything is contractual" (1984: 158).

According to North, institutions are the rules of the game in a society that shape human interaction. They can be both formal and informal. Formal institutions are formal constraints, like rules that human beings devise, while informal constraints are embodied in customs, traditions, and codes of conduct (North, 1990: 3,4, 6). For Helmke and Levitsky, informal institutions are "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels," while formal institutions are "rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced through channels widely accepted as official" (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004: 727). Somewhat similarly, Routh writes of informal economic activities that, at a general level, they "can be defined as activities that are not regulated, monitored or controlled directly or indirectly by the state" (2011: 211).

Various scholars (Mica *et al.*, 2015; Hayoz 2013) have pointed out that formality and informality closely interact with each other¹. In fact, "informality is a necessary 'by-product' of formality (Giordano and Hayoz 2013: p. 15), and to a certain extent, *vice versa*. Drawing upon findings of studies on organizations and governance, Hayoz (2013) argues that modern systems based on organizations, such as companies, schools, banks, and state administration would break down without informal structures, whether

¹ One is here tempted to qualify the interrelation of formal and informal as a *dialectical* one – "informality of conduct and formality of rules are joined together notwithstanding their opposition and tensions. Their relationship is far from immutable and their dynamism results in the evolution of styles of interaction" (Misztal, 2015: 108).

within organizations or in interaction with other systems (Hayoz 2013: 52). Informalization and formalization, according to Barbara Misztal, “are the key to reinventing and sustaining meaningful social relationships in modern societies. Hence, the essential issue is how to synchronize these two processes so they would contribute to the improvement of the quality of social life” (2000: 9).

Along similar lines, Mica and her colleagues (2015) maintain that while modern societies depend on formal structures, such as formal organizations that organize collective lives, they are also perpetuated by various informal practices – “informal ways of getting things done play a central part in maintaining the formal order”).² Moreover, every informal practice takes place in a formal environment. (Mica *et al.*, 2015: 9). For example, Ledeneva (1998, 2008) talked about the mutually exploitative dependence between formal institutions and informal practices in the Soviet Union (Ledeneva 2008: 123). More particularly, she focused on the informal practice of *blat*, which is the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and circumvent formal procedures. (Ledeneva 1998; 2008). *Blat* is still widely used in post-soviet Russia, although it has been transformed, given that money has now taken a much greater role (Ledeneva 2008). The use of personal connections to circumvent formal processes has been found by other scholars. For example, Williams and Yang (2017) conducted a survey in Bulgaria on the use of *vruzki*, that is the use of personal connections in soliciting favors for and from others. They found out that about 30 per cent of respondents had used *vruzki* in the 12 months prior to the survey, particularly when accessing medical services and finding a job.

The data for this study were collected using qualitative methods. The instrument used to gather the empirical data was that of semi-structured in-depth interviews with relevant participants in selected local places in Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Slovenia. In order to protect the anonymity of the subjects in this study, pseudonyms or numbers are used, not their real names. This research approach was further complemented by a review of statistical, demographic and other secondary on-site and on-line sources.

² It would be wrong to conceptualize informality as an opposite pole of the ordered social structure, since according to Ledeneva the evidence counterintuitively suggests that the “informal sector is driven by regulations more than the formal is”. Durkheim’s considerations of *anomie* as a specific type of social structure is a classic and corrective case in point – “[h]e was able to show that social behaviour which is ‘not well regulated’ has its distinct sociological regularities” (Elias & Scotson, 1994: 178).

2 CASE ILLUSTRATIONS

2.1 ALBANIA

2.1.1 Background to Albanian Emigration

Emigration from Albania was banned during the four decades while the communist government was in power. The collapse of the communist system in the early 1990s, along with the transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy, unleashed several large-scale waves of immigration from Albania to the countries of Western Europe, in particular Greece and Italy, but other countries as well (Vullnetari, 2007)

The first wave of migration occurred during the year 1990, where on July 2nd, several hundred Albanians, frustrated with the situation in the country, stormed several of the buildings of foreign embassies (Italy, France, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Turkey). These numbers soon reached thousands (about 5,000). Upon pressure from abroad, Albanian authorities allowed them to leave the country and resettle in these countries (Predojevic-Despic *et al.*, 2016; Hein 1998: 221). In the meantime many others crossed borders to Greece, while some others attempted to flee to Italy and Montenegro. Up until early 1991, about 20,000 Albanians had left the country (Barjaba and King 2005; Vullnetari 2007).

The year 1991 witnessed the second wave of migration, that of boat exodus to Italy and mass migration to Greece. In early March 1991, about 25 thousand Albanians boarded ships and vessels at the ports of Durrës and Vlora and sailed across the Adriatic to Italy. In August of the same year, about 20,000 more got onto boats and sailed to Bari, Italy, but most of them were eventually repatriated (Barjaba and King 2005; King 2003: 288; Hall 1994: 189). In the period from March to August 1991, about 40,000 Albanians arrived in Italy. In the meantime, many moved to Greece. However, this migration is not well documented, given that much of it involved crossing the borders via the mountains (King and Mai 2002: 164; King 2003).

The second wave of migration was followed by a third one, in the year 1997. During this year a set of informal investment schemes, known as “pyramid schemes,” which had sprung up in 1993, collapsed and millions of Albanians lost their life savings. The collapse of the pyramid schemes led to riots, protests, even the looting of military arsenals, causing the breakdown of law and order, leading to complete anarchy. This situation unleashed another wave of migration, which took massive proportions (Predojevic *et al.*, 2016: 83; King 2003: 288). Thus, in a matter of a decade or so, from a country with virtually no international migration, successive migrant waves brought the number of Albanians abroad to between 1.4 and 1.5 million (INSTAT 2012).

2.1.2 Albanian return migrant entrepreneurs

This section presents empirical findings for Albania. In the case of Albania, two people were interviewed, one man and one woman. Both were return migrant entrepreneurs. The participants were reached using the author's social networks.

While a significant number of Albanians left the country, after a certain period of time abroad, many have “returned” as well. Their socio-economic reintegration varies. One of the ways of reintegration of return migrants is engagement in entrepreneurial activities (Hamdoucha and Wahbab 2015; Marcheta 2011; Piracha and Vadean 2010; Wahba and Zeza, 2009; Dustmann and Kirchkamp 2002). In fact, some have argued that return migrants have a higher propensity than nonmigrants to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Dustmann and Kirchkamp 2002; Wahba and Zeza, 2009). Existing studies on Albanian return migration (Germeji and Milo 2009; Kilic *et al.*, 2009; de Zweger *et al.*, 2005; Lambrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2005) show that a significant number of returned migrants engage in entrepreneurship.

Both participants lived and worked in Greece as immigrants and have since returned to Albania. Arlinda, one of the interviewees, owns an embroidery business, Shkelzen, the other participant in the study, owns a children's clothing store, where he works with his wife. In addition, he co-owns a bar with his brother. Both have a high school education and both are in their forties. Arlinda stayed about 12 years in Greece, while Shkelzen recalled that, between the year 1992 and 1997, he had spent about two years in Greece³. After spending a certain period of time, the respondents returned to Albania. Arlinda, along with her family, came back in 2009, whereas Shkelzen returned in 1997. They worked in various jobs in Greece. Arlinda had mainly worked in domestic care, taking care of elderly people in Greece, as well as cleaning houses in Athens. Shkelzen had also worked in Athens, first in a factory that produced bristles for plastic brooms, and later in a supermarket in Athens, arranging items on the shelves, as well as selling supermarket products.

Concerning the relationship between formal and informal institutions in the case of Albania, we identified two major themes:

1. use of social networks for employment and purchases.
2. complying or not complying with customs and labor law, and their motivation

2.1.3 Use of social networks for purchases:

Social networks, along with corresponding practices and ensuing effects, have been one of the most studied informal institutions in immigration. “Networks can be seen as dispersed, loosely connected communities of individuals who experienced themselves as governed by ties of mutual trust and obligation” (Makovsky, 2009:120). Networks, or dispersed communities, “exist to the extent that their members understand each other

³ During these years, Shkelzen used to travel back and forth between Albania and Greece to work in Greece

for practical purposes; and so they operate through culture. They use implicit rules (customs) rather than state-made laws and usually regulate their members informally, relying on the sanction of exclusion rather than punishment” (Hart, 2006: 31). It is these “informal personalized networks on which people rely in ambiguous circumstances where the collective interest is constructed” (Misztal, 2000: 9).

Both migrants use social networks for various reasons. One practice is to purchase goods abroad. Arlinda, for example, goes to Greece every three months. She usually goes for vacation, but also uses her time in Greece to get material for her business. When in Greece, she stays with people she knew while she lived there. She buys goods in Greece that she cannot find in Albania, such as special catalogues for the embroidery and special thread that she needs for her business. She purchases them at a lower price and much better quality than in Albania. In this case, she uses her previously established networks to stay with friends, rather than staying at the hotel which would be expensive for her. Shkelzen also travels to Greece twice a month to buy children’s clothes for his store. While he and his wife are in Greece for business purposes, they stay with other Albanian migrants, relatives of his who live there.

In addition, Arlinda uses her social networks to employ people for her business. She takes orders for paid labour, and gives it out to two, (sometimes) three women who work at home. The two workers do not have another job. She knows these people, since they live in her neighbourhood. Arlinda mentioned that she does not pay any insurance for the women she employs, because she could not afford to declare them as workers. In this way, she engages in the informal practice of avoiding formal Albanian labour laws,⁴ according to which the employer is obliged to make social security and health security payments for employees.

2.1.4 Avoiding Customs

Both Arlinda and Shkelzen have practiced a certain degree of other forms of informality, by avoiding paying customs fees. Arlinda said that when she goes to Greece, she buys only a few items, such as 10 or 15 small pictures, or 10 or 15 pieces of thread that she needs for her business. She buys them at cheaper prices in stores that carry wholesale products. She tells the customs officers that the items are for her own personal use, not for her business, in order to avoid paying customs fees as required by the law. Paying customs fees, according to her, means that the cost of goods increases and her business would not be able to survive.

Similarly, Shkelzen gets a considerable part of the supplies (children’ clothes) for his store in Albania directly from factories in Thessaloniki. He buys the products, usually spending no more than 500 Euros. Sometimes he does not pay customs fees for the products he brings into Albania. He asks Albanian drivers who drive back and forth from Greece to Albania to transport these items. He usually packs them in three bags. When the drivers go through customs, they tell the customs officers that these items are for their children (he does not have a car). He pays these drivers a certain amount of money (usually the

⁴ Law No. 143/2015, date 17.12.2015

equivalent of a passenger fare). He says he has to do this, otherwise his business would go bankrupt, because, in his view, not everybody follows rules, therefore he is faced with unfair competition.

In his words: “Other people bring them to me. They bring them with their cars. I do not know how they do it. With three bags. I do not get a lot of stuff. If I buy only 500 Euros worth of products, that’s it, two small bags. Even a taxi person brings it. If the taxi driver brings them three times a month, that’s it for me. They bring three bags with their car. When they go through customs, they tell them, these are from my children. I, personally do not have a car.... The drivers get their profit. Like a passenger. A passenger pays about 50 Euros. So instead of taking a passenger, he takes my products and bring them to me.” (Shkelzen, owner of clothing store).

As we can see from these examples, both interviewees justify their act of not complying with the custom law by the fact that their businesses would not survive had they followed the official rules. Therefore, they engage in circumventing the formal system in order to sustain their business activity. This is not unique for these two returnee entrepreneurs. Several researchers (Bettina *et al.*, 2011) found a similar phenomenon among small-scale cross-border traders and smuggling at the Finnish-Russian, Polish-Ukrainian, Polish-Belarusian and Ukrainian-Romanian borders, where informal economic activities were widespread and widely accepted as a way of earning a living.

2.2 KOSOVO

This section presents empirical findings for Kosovo. Migration, either connected to the pursuit of employment and better life conditions or as a result of political violence, is by no means a new social phenomenon in Kosovo. It has accompanied Kosovo throughout its history with profound effects on political, social and economic conditions. Kosovo can be defined as a country of emigration. It has a large diaspora of 700,000 people, the majority of whom live in Germany and Switzerland (see Table 1). Based on push factors and the motives of migration through time, researchers and policy makers speak of three waves of migration in Kosovo. The first wave of migration occurred in the period 1960-1980, due to economic reasons, as Kosovo was the poorest region in the former Yugoslavia. The second wave of migration was induced by the oppressive regime of the Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević and the war of 1998-1999, and especially during the NATO campaign, when 850,000 Kosovar Albanians were deported by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces (Human Rights Watch 1999:4). Lastly, the third wave has taken place in the post-war period to the present day. The push-factors for the current migration of Kosovars are economic, as Kosovo’s economic development is slow and unemployment remains high. The unemployment rate in Kosovo is 32.9 per cent, with 28.1 percent are men unemployed, in contrast to 40 percent of women (UNDP 2014:19).

Table 1. Kosovo Diaspora by country (in%)

10 leading countries	%
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Germany	35.25
Switzerland	22.94
Italy	7.26
Austria	5.61
Sweden	5.14
USA	3.53
France	3.25
England	2.79
Belgium	2.07
Slovenia	1.78
Other	10.38

Source: Ministry of Diaspora of Kosovo

Remittances from the diaspora are vital for Kosovo and have a positive impact on the reduction of poverty. In 2010, remittances to Kosovo reached a total of 511.6 million Euros. More than 40 per cent of Kosovars have family members abroad and one in four families receives remittances (Ibid.: 25). In 2012, remittances made up 17 per cent of the GDP of Kosovo, making Kosovo one of the top 15 recipients of remittances worldwide (Ibid.: 33). Labor migration and mobility in Europe is perceived to have a positive impact on human development in Kosovo. Many studies and calls from civil society have urged the European Union (EU) countries to enact friendly policies for labor migration for Kosovo along with visa liberalization within the Schengen Area for Kosovars (Ibid.:79; ESI 2006:2). Today, Kosovo is the only country in the region not granted visa-free travel in the European travel zone. Kosovars can travel without a visa to only four countries: Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey. In June 2012, the EU provided the Kosovo government with a 'Road Map for Visa Liberalization,' spelling out a set of conditions the Kosovan state must fulfill in order for its citizens to be considered for a visa-free regime. Kosovo has yet to deliver on the conditions set by the EU and thus for the visa liberalization to take place.

2.2.1 The Kosovo State and Diaspora: A Formal Relationship

Migration is a form of ‘mobility and a dynamic set of relations between places, cultures, people and identifications’ (Passerini et al. 2007:3). In Kosovo diaspora is perceived as ‘a human resource’ and as a ‘potential for development’. To be sure, migration is contributing to the changing economic structure of Kosovo. Moreover, the Kosovo diaspora has accompanied the dominant narratives of state and nation building. The national discourses have sought not only to include the diaspora in the national self, but also to utilize its potential to play a specific role in projecting a positive image of Kosovo in the world. Furthermore, the state is preoccupied with the census of diaspora as a strategy for inclusion of the diaspora in the ‘national body’, taken to nurture a sense of belonging and foster connectedness with Kosovo. Thus, to maximize the benefits from the diaspora through social and economic exchanges, the Kosovan state set out to develop a law to regulate diaspora relations to meet the state’s interests.

2.2.2 Formal Practices: Law and the Ministry of Diaspora

Integration of the diaspora into the social, cultural and economic life of Kosovo is manifold and is manifested through formal and informal practices. One of the domains of formal practices in the exchanges between the diaspora and Kosovo is in the realm of law and governance. In April 2010, Kosovo adopted a law on the diaspora. The law sets the following aims: 1) to preserve and cultivate language, culture and education as well as identity; 2) to define diaspora relations with institutions of Kosovo; and 3) to promote inter-cultural relations between the Kosovo diaspora and states where the diaspora resides (Law on Diaspora 2010, Article 1 and Article 2). The law initially foresaw the establishment of the Diaspora Agency in the Prime Minister’s Office, but in 2011, the government decided to establish the Ministry of Diaspora (www.med.rks-gov.net).

The scope of work of the Ministry of Diaspora focuses on legislation defining the diaspora; activities related to cultural identity, language and education of the members of diaspora; offering support to members of the diaspora for economic investment in Kosovo, and last but not least, fostering networks in research and science. The Kosovo Cultural Centers of the Diaspora are tasked with conducting activities that aim to preserve cultural identity and education (Law on Diaspora 2010, Article 8). Their main activities include training for teachers of official languages in Kosovo and promoting cultural heritage. In addition, the Centers also promote economic investment in Kosovo (ibid.: Article 9). To tap into the diaspora’s economic resources, the Ministry of Diaspora initiated the Network of Albanian Businesses in 2014. According to the Ministry of Diaspora, business networks of the Kosovo diaspora are established in 22 countries with around 3,000 businesses as members.

Looking historically, the pattern of migrants returning to Kosovo had been to save money to support the family with cash to purchase necessary goods and/or construct a house in the village for the next generation (ESI 2006:3). Subsequently, it has evolved further with most of the ‘diaspora investment in Kosovo being organized on a community level, and mostly covering small infrastructure projects such as roads, sanitation systems, community centers, school and educational projects’ (GIZ 2012:30). Today this is changing.

To understand the interaction between formal and informal institutions and how it can affect migrants' return and investment, let us take a look at an enterprise established by one family from the Kosovo diaspora in the United States (US).

2.2.3 Place, People, Movements: Migration and Return of the Shehu Family

Rahovec is a municipality located in the southwestern part of Kosovo. The town and its 35 surrounding villages cover an area of approximately 275 km². The population of Rahovec is 56,208, out of which the vast majority are Albanians (OSCE 2015:1). Other ethnic groups living in Rahovec include Roma, Bosniak, Turkish, and Serbs who live in the village Velika Hoča/Hoçë e Madhe. Rahovec municipality is an agricultural locality, with remarkably suitable land for grapes and vineyards. It has many wine and beverage producers. This has contributed to the dominant storyline of Rahovec as a town of vineyards and wine. In fact, Rahovec represents about 50 per cent of the vineyard areas and wine production capacity in Kosovo (Ministry of Trade of Kosovo 2008: 32). The municipal logo of Rahovec is a castle with a grapevine. Rahovec aims to become a wine tourist area in Kosovo. The *Grape Day* has become an annual celebration every 7 September, attracting many visitors.

Yet the history of the city at the present time is filled with painful memories from the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo. Rahovec town dwellers and those living in villages experienced forced expulsion and sporadic killings. The worst atrocity in Rahovec municipality was the killing of more than one hundred men in Postoselo, executed on March 31, 1999 (HRW 2000: 281-283). The family of Selatin Shehu is one of the families from Rahovec who fled the war in Kosovo in 1999. The Shehu family by that time had already lost its grandfather who was a *Baba*, a religious leader, the head of the tekke of the Bektashi, part of the Sufi order which is predominant in Rahovec. He was shot by the Serb military forces in 1998.

The Shehu family sought refuge in Skopje, Macedonia, a country which, along with Albania, witnessed the largest numbers of Kosovar war refugees. Due to concerns from neighboring countries about internal stability in the face of the refugee and humanitarian crises within their borders, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees managed a Humanitarian Evacuation Program, which moved refugees from Kosovo to a number of countries around the world, including: Germany, US, France, the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom and others (see Van Selm 2000). One of the members of the Shehu family was in a critical health condition, in need of medical attention. They sought assistance from the Humanitarian Evacuation Program and were granted the right to seek refugee status in the US. In April 1999, the Shehu family settled in Michigan, US. Two brothers and their families and the grandparents are now US citizens. Yet they planned to return to Rahovec, with a business in mind, and a life between the two worlds: the US and Kosovo.

2.2.4 The Return: The Politics of Identity and Belonging

Along with the Shehu family there are dozens of members of the diaspora who returned to set up businesses, mostly in vine production in Rahovec. In 2012, the Shehu family

established a company of wine production named *Kosova Wine*. It is a family business with 12 employees, two of whom are women. Businesses like this of the Shehu family are of great importance in places like Rahovec where unemployment is over 40 per cent (Municipality of Rahovec Development Plan 2011: 34.) For the Shehu family, the migrant experience is always in relation with home. But the return to Kosovo is linked to nostalgia, as can be discerned in the following statement of the returnee enterprise owner, who said:

Living in the US has served our family well. We could work. We visited many places. As wine production is part of our family history we were interested to know about wines and wineries in California, as California is famous for wines. Visiting California was beautiful and a great learning experience. But I have come to believe that there is no better place, no better wines and vineyards than those of Rahovec.

The connection of the Shehu family with Kosovo is strong, just as the name of the company suggests: *Kosova Wine*. To be sure, it is a way of expressing 'Kosovar-ness', a sense of belonging and identity as Kosovar Albanians in a globalized world. As the entrepreneur has pointed out: "My life experience in Kosovo and the US has shaped me in a unique way, but I have one identity. I am a Kosovar Albanian."

However, the intersubjective relation of the Shehu family with Kosovo is often ambivalent and with tensions. Despite the nostalgic view of the homeland that the Shehu family has maintained, one can discern a sense of disappointment relating to their unfulfilled expectations for economic development and prosperous life in Kosovo. In the returnee entrepreneur's view the

economic development is sluggish. Young people are overwhelmingly unemployed. Those who do work have low salaries. The purchasing power is weak. There is little prospect for a better life with the current economic trends. This is disheartening and we had all hoped that Kosovo's development would be much bolder and faster. The weak economy affects our work and profit too. There is a growing consumption of wine in Kosovo but there are demands for low prices. And these two things are impossible to reconcile.

Yet, the Shehu family shows the prospects for transformative power born out of multiple-directional flows and movements of people, ideas and goods harnessed through the interplay between formal and informal practices.

2.2.5 The Bonds of Solidarity: An Intersection of Formal and Informal Practices

As argued earlier in this paper, informality is a pattern of social life that is multifaceted, socially embedded, and connected to formal institutions. Indeed, as Bernard Chavance has pointed out, informal rules are formed at numerous levels of economic life and action. Some have a cultural and long-standing nature, but many have a limited time span and a remote or weak relationship with cultural values and rules (Chavance 2008: 57-71). As part of social life, informality is a process and a way of conducting affairs through an interplay of actors, rules, and norms across time and space. Informal rules

are resilient and enduring, and often remain in the private domain of family and kinship relations (see Williamson 2009). The importance of social capital, trust and solidarity to the study of informality, is salient in Kosovo. Informality is omnipresent and shaped through an interplay between formal and informal practices of family and social networks.

The predominance of legalist discourses of informality in Kosovo (Danielsson 2016:247) has rendered invisible the structuralist and the network school of informality. As part of the liberal institution-building in Kosovo the World Bank, as one of the chief regulators of the macro-economic policy, has actively sought to address informality, alas problematically by 'equating informality with un-documented arrangements' (Ibid.:248). In Kosovo, the common belief is that informality is an unquestioned way of doing business. The most common practices involve the usage of unofficial invoices and/or use of a double set of invoices for the same transaction; working with false invoices, and not paying the correct amount of customs duties (Ibid.:253). Thus, informality in the economic sphere may signify the social acceptability of practices outside the law and the power of the state.

While economic activity is defined by state regulation; informality on the other hand escapes the regulatory power of the state. Yet as Karl Polanyi argued long ago economic action is socially embedded (Polanyi 1957: 243-270). The small-size enterprises provide favourable conditions for informal, personalized, network-based patterns of organization (Borocz 2000:36). As a kinship-based enterprise, the Shehu company is rooted in sociality; it stands in the nexus between formal rules and bonds of solidarity with kinship and community. The enterprise relies on kin-labor force and informal social networks of clients as illustrated in the following quotes:

I mostly employ workers from my family and kinship because I want to support them. But they also are familiar with wine production as this has been an important activity in our family and community. Working together I get to know them better and they also get to know me better. We have become like one big family.

We sell our wines in the market in Kosovo. But most important are the clients that we have got from the social networks of my sons, and my extended family [...] former co-workers, soccer club fans; high school mates [...] all of them keep spreading the word about our wines and they have brought us clients.⁵

The constraints outlaid by the regulatory power of law, and thus choices made to stay within the legal framework of doing business, have not however, prevented the enterprise leadership from fostering kin-relations and social ties. Thus, formal and informal practices in this economic action are shaped by social norms and social capital. As the returnee businessman explained:

⁵ These findings are in line with findings from other studies on return migration (see Anwar & Chan 2016; Predojevic-Depsic et al., 2016)

In Rahovec families and kinship rely on each other for support. That's how it has always been. We have lived with the social norm that you have foremost to support your family and kin members.

Contrary to the legalist view of informality as 'less formal' and negative, this case shows that ambivalence permeates informality and that it can play a supportive role (see Ledeneva 2014). Indeed, in the case of Shehu family the reliance on kinship and social networks illustrates the supportive role of informality. As a returnee entrepreneurship, this example shows the interconnections between formality and informality: operating within the legal framework, and adopting informal practices embedded in social solidarity (investment in Kosovo and reliance on kinship and social networks). Yet as an economic activity carried out in the nexus between formal/informal practices, it is fluid and temporal. All in all, this type of formal/informal activity not only plays a role in spurring economic development but also fosters social ties in an ever-increasing atomization of Kosovo society under contemporary market forces and flows of people, ideas, and goods across space and through time.

2.3 SERBIA

2.3.1 A short history of emigration from modern-day Serbia⁶

Serbia is a typical emigration country. The negative natural increase together with a negative migration balance leads to the aging of the population and a continuous decline in the number of people living in Serbia (Nikitović, 2011)

The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (of which Serbia was a part) during the period between 1980 to 1990 entered a growing and deepening social and economic crisis. Unemployment, very low wages, weak economic and financial status of the people, and social upheavals led to the impoverishment of the majority of the population and influenced the development of the gray and black economy. The breakup of Yugoslavia, conflicts and expulsion of people, ending with the Kosovo crisis in 1999, initiated massive migrations, most of which had the character of forced migration (Hovy, 2011).

In the absence of official statistics, the best source of information on international migration flows from Serbia are the data from the receiving countries. One of the most reliable indicators of forced migration is the number of submitted asylum applications to western industrialized countries. According to the UNHCR, in the first half of the 1990s, over a million asylum applications of persons originating from the Balkan countries were submitted to the highly-developed countries (mainly Germany, Austria, France and Switzerland). Most of the applications came from Serbia and Montenegro, numbering over half a million (Bonifazi, 2011).

⁶ This part of the paper is based on Dinić and Sindić, *forthcoming*. For an excellent overview of international migration trends in Serbia see : Pavlov *et al.* 2014: 27-33.

Given the low probability of return to their homeland, these asylum seekers are generally allowed to stay in the West and to fully integrate into the new environment (Hovy, 2011). Economic relations between countries of destination and countries of origin, economic benefits offered by the country of destination, existing social and family ties, asylum policy, affinity, reputation, or, to a large extent, the factor of luck and chance, can be used to explain why the Western countries have become a destination for forced migrants (Vandeburie, 2011). The brain drain also hit Serbia at the beginning of the transition and this phenomenon continues nowadays, because of the situation in which the most qualified individuals are unable to find adequate work, even though their abilities, skills and knowledge can contribute greatly to the economic sector and every other sector in the country.

Compared with other former Yugoslav countries, the largest number of migrants in the region came from Serbia and Montenegro – 626,000 persons in 2000, three-quarters of whom were refugees. According to the OECD data, Serbia and Montenegro has the highest number of emigrants who live in the Western European countries – over a million residents (Bonifazi, 2011).

2.3.2 Remarks on interviews and respondents

The Serbian team conducted three interviews: one in Bujanovac (with an Albanian male, 42 years old, with a high school diploma⁷) and two in Niš (with two males, 55 and 65 years old, an electrical technician⁸ and a welder/assembler⁹).

The interviewee from Bujanovac worked in Switzerland as an auto mechanic. He left in 1988, and came back in 2009. The electrical technician from Niš worked in Gabon, Germany and Mexico. The welder, who is originally from Ohrid, Macedonia and is currently residing in Niš, went to Austria first, and later moved to Germany in 1969. He came back to Serbia in 2011, after retirement.

Like in the case of Albania, several themes regarding informal practices were noticed in the case of Serbia. These included social networking in assisting people during the migration process, and paying bribes and avoid taxes.

2.3.3 Social Networks in helping people leave Serbia and move to other countries and paying bribes

Scholars have long recognized the existence and importance of networks in assisting people in the whole process of migration. They lower the cost of travel, assist immigrants in finding shelter and jobs in the country of destination, ease adjustment in to the host

⁷ Interviewed by Marija Stefanović.

⁸ Interviewed by Jelena Dinić.

⁹ Interviewed by Miloš Jovanović.

society, and help maintain the ties to their communities of origin (Margolis 1994; Hagan 1998; Repak 1995; Boyd 1989; Gold 2010).

In line with other studies mentioned above, the people who were interviewed had a family member, friend or acquaintance who assisted them with their journey and helped them with their initial “getting around” in the foreign country. For example, the electric technician said that he got a call from a friend who worked in Gabon, and gave him instructions as to how to leave Serbia and move to Gabon. A company in Belgrade recruited people based on acquaintance and recommendations, and following his friend’s advice he contacted them and started the procedure that lasted about twenty days. The “woman from the company” managed all of the complicated paper work and, along with another company member, “took care” of bribes for the local administration in Gabon. According to him: “some two thousand euros were payed. In principle it is very strict, because they are corrupt country, it goes to the head of one of their own police force, or something, so they don’t bother you”.

On the other hand, when he went to Germany, he did so with the help of a Slovene friend, who acted as an illegal employer. No taxes or social security were paid. Our interviewee stayed in Germany on a tourist visa.

Interviewer: So, in fact, the deal was that you are doing work for him there, and he pays you per diem, so who pays him?

Respondent: Well, Audi, directly.

Interviewer: Audi pays him, he takes a percentage of your wages?

Respondent: Yes, that's right. He, for example, lists nine workers in his contract, and in addition smuggles two more Serbs. And then, there is “the omission” on a payroll in that no names are written, he takes care of that, that’s the scheme.

The same Slovene friend also helped him to find work in Mexico. The bribes were again a necessary part of the migration procedure:

Respondent: He [Slovene friend – M. J.] had contacts, because he is one of the associates, was a Montenegrin who worked for years with Audi, working for years in robotics. He, normally, had some of his connections there, at the top of Audi, with the heads of organization. So, in the application form they skipped the fact that the worker is a Serb, and write only the name, but inadvertently, mistakenly omitted nationality. And they sent it to the Mexican embassy here in Belgrade. There was always something missing, in fact two or three thousand euros, which were given unofficially to the Mexican ambassador.

Interviewer: Mexican?

Respondent: Yes, because, it was “come tomorrow, come the day after tomorrow, come next time,” and so for a month, which between the lines meant that something had to be given, since they are corrupt. So the man did what had to be done, and we got our visas in half an hour.

The interviewee from Bujanovac was “pulled” to Switzerland by his father, who had been there since 1979. He finished elementary school there, and later qualified as an automotive electrician, but also took different courses on auto mechanics, diagnostics and the like, thus taking full advantage of the formal professional education system.

Although he was satisfied with his jobs in Switzerland, nostalgia made him come back to Bujanovac, “the solidarity and warmth that can be felt in my country, in contrast to the coldness that exists between the Swiss.” Moreover, according to him, “you can earn a lot of money there, but don’t have the time to enjoy it”. He also built a family house in his hometown, since he married and had children while abroad.

Upon his return to Bujanovac, the auto mechanic started a number of private businesses: he rents 6 apartments (without paying taxes to the state), owns a shop with car parts, operates a car service, imports used cars from Switzerland and sells them, but does not follow the formal/legal procedure, as his firm is not registered for car sales. In addition, he opened a small dental clinic for his wife that is located in the same building as the apartments for rent and the car-service. The clinic was registered in the name of a doctor from the nearby city of Vranje, because his wife is only a dental technician, and is therefore not eligible to operate a dental clinic herself. For a while he also operated a call-centre for selling insurance to people from Switzerland, however this was short lived, because there was fraud involved and the interviewee did not want to give any more information about it. In addition, he owns a hair and beauty salon, along with a massage parlour. The people employed there are not registered and no taxes are paid. Customers call and schedule sessions. At the ground level, there is also a furniture showroom which he rents to his business partners from Leskovac.

During the interview he did not want to be recorded on tape and share all information on his enterprises. However, he showed us the businesses he owns. Although many of his economic activities are not registered, his firms and advertisements for each of the firms were displayed on the front wall of his house.

He rationalized his way of way of doing business with the fact that bureaucracy in Serbia was complicated and was very corrupt. In his view, even if you really wanted to run a real legitimate business, it was almost impossible to do it. Therefore he used bribery, as a way to avoid formal rules and regulation.

The importance of social capital or the existing networks cannot be stressed enough. No matter how good the idea for business is, and no matter how profitable it can be – it comes to nothing without knowing the right people and “sharing a piece of the cake” with them. Sometimes knowing the right people can be a way to find about a lucrative opportunity or the possibility of quick profits, which is almost always in the grey zone of the legal. Having many friends also means a security and safety net in case of the failure.

Finally, the elderly welder, who currently resides in Niš, left for Austria in 1969, when he was 18. He came back to Yugoslavia to finish the then obligatory military service, and afterward went to Germany, with the help of his brother-in-law.

Like the informant from Bujanovac, he took every opportunity to increase his knowledge and qualifications, and did very well career wise, reaching the position of *Geschäftsführer* (managing director). During the interview he continuously stressed the importance of learning foreign languages and getting accustomed to the culture of the country one arrived as a *Gastarbeiter*, emphasizing that this has to be a personal achievement. In his words: “it all depends on you, on the individual”, therefore in his view, one must show an interest, otherwise there will be no results.

Upon returning to Serbia, he started to work as a middleman between the German company and young Serbian workers, helping both of them: assisting the German company with finding hardworking and dedicated employees, and helping Serbian workers in getting fair work for fair wage. He considered his engagement as a form of “giving a little bit back” to his former employee and the youth of his home region – south Serbia and north Macedonia. These regions are known for poverty and stagnancy, compared to, for example, Vojvodina (Serbian northern province), which in his view produces “simple and honest young men eager for work”.

His activities revolved around helping young workers with red tape and numerous technicalities involved in getting a work visa in Germany, but also with “teaching” them how to live productive life to the fullest – thus sharing the “know how” of his own experience he gained as a migrant worker. All of his activities are legal and “fully covered by papers” – he had to open a firm in Serbia in order to make it so. Taxes and contributions to social and health insurance are paid. But, also, in the spirit of classic entrepreneurship, no “cracks” in the regulations aren’t taken advantage of – if there is a legal way of avoiding a fee or speeding up the procedure, he will take it.

He reaches potential candidates through his personal acquaintances but also through the internet, especially the online work market (poslovi.infostud.com). As a result, he has become computer savvy, which is unusual for a person his age.

Today, as he helps young welders from the south of Serbia and north Macedonia to get jobs in Germany (thus supporting the “chain migrations” phenomenon), he advises them to follow in his footsteps when it comes to integrating into the new society and getting to know its culture and customs.

The welder from Niš also “disciplines” the young workers whom he helps to find employment with his old boss from Germany. He “teaches” them the value of being thrifty and responsible as he makes them show him the receipt that they get when they send money back to their families and kin at home. This particular (informal) action is not legal (young workers are not legally obliged to submit an account of their spending to him), however, he practices it, because it has shown to be very effective in creating the work and leisure discipline, which in the end proves to be beneficial.

2.4 SLOVENIA

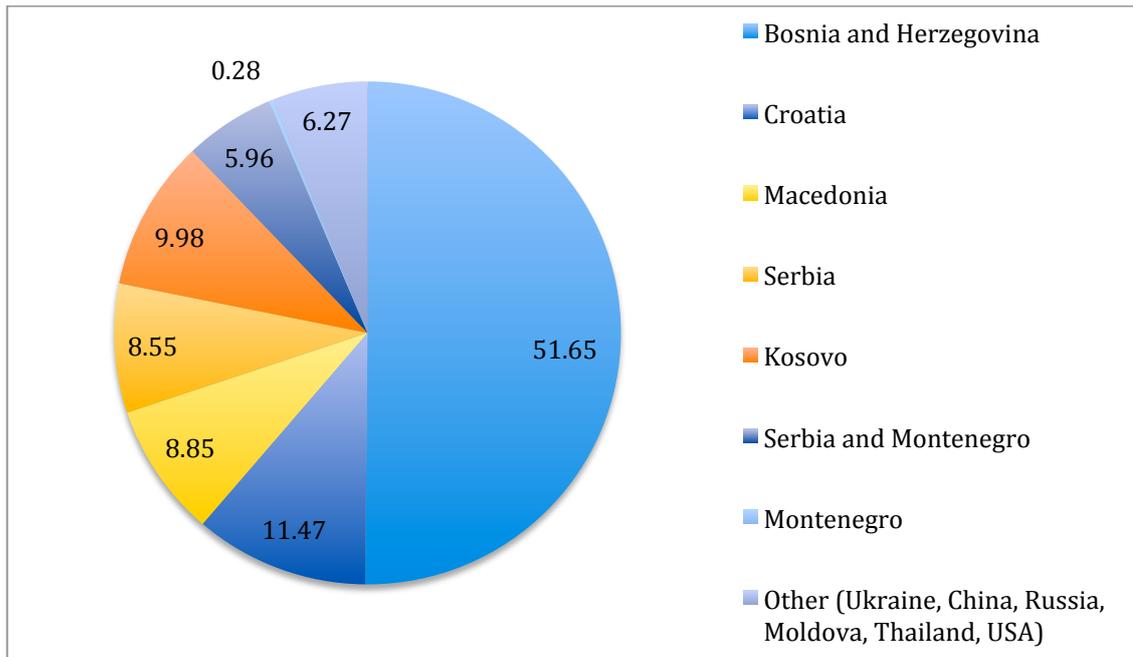
2.4.1 A short history of migrations in Slovenia

From a historical perspective migrations have always been a part of Slovenian society. However, compared to other countries of the region, they were limited in terms of extent and duration, and were also highly regulated, thus playing a secondary role within the broader history of Slovenia (Vidic, 2003). For example, during the Austro-Hungarian Empire the right of Slovenians to emigrate was strictly regulated. Failure to acquire the required permit prior to migration meant risking the punishment of seizing all family possessions and rendering the violator's testament invalid within the borders of Austro-Hungarian Empire. Migrations were supervised by the empire and about 5-10% of assets transferred abroad through migrations were to be paid to the empire (Valenčič, 1990). These regulations were in power until 1867 when the act of free migration within the territory of the empire was ratified. Nevertheless, migration out of Slovenia was rare, mostly because of the predominantly agricultural way of life that, along with handicrafts, enabled people to manage their poverty and survive. Industrialization, however, destroyed most of the traditional survival strategies and when economic crisis struck at the beginning of the 20th century, the country witnessed several large migration waves to United States (Peternel, 2003). They diminished significantly after United States introduced restrictive immigration measures in 1924, although a minor wave of political migrants was also noted during this period.

It should be pointed out that during this time, Slovenia experienced a considerable degree of immigration. This consisted mainly of German speaking entrepreneurs and industrialists who bought assets and invested in Slovenia. Many major Slovenian cities like Maribor were populated predominantly by foreigners and became very prosperous and economically successful during this time. WWII rearranged the social, cultural and economic landscape of the region. Politically motivated emigration from Yugoslav republics continued, but this was not the case with Slovenia. On the contrary, the period of economic and social stability in Slovenia meant that emigration was a relatively rare phenomenon. Development of heavy industry and agriculture, along with the big Yugoslavian market, rendered emigration unnecessary and Slovenian people stayed at home. However, a large number of mainly economic migrants from other Yugoslav republics moved to the country. These were predominantly from BiH, and today they represent over 90% of migrants in Slovenia (Vidic, 2003).

Currently, emigration out of Slovenia is mostly limited to daily commutes abroad, especially to neighbouring cities in Austria (i.e. Graz) and Italy (Trieste). These are almost exclusively economically motivated, since neighbouring countries offer somewhat better employment and relative proximity enables people to move with ease. Only 2% of Slovenians actually migrated abroad permanently. The ones that are emigrating are highly educated professionals seeking better employment abroad (Bevc et al, 2000 cited in Vidic, 2003).

Because of geographic, lingual and cultural proximity, Slovenia is still relatively popular among people from Ex-Yugoslav republics (91%). In addition, other people, mainly from former socialist and communist countries (mostly Russia, Ukraine and Moldova), are coming to the country, seeking employment in the EU and using Slovenia as an entry point into (see Graph 1). The country is also gaining popularity as a clean, healthy, peaceful and green destination for people, seeking a place away from urban areas.



Graph 1. Work permits issued by Slovenian Ministry for Foreigners in 2011 (percentages)

2.4.2 Empirical findings

This section presents empirical findings for Slovenia. The case study in Slovenia is based on 22 interviews with respondents who have experienced international mobility. There are three general patterns of migration recognizable among the respondents:

Permanent migration: the main characteristic of this type is the permanent transference of residence and eventual acquisition of foreign citizenship, as well as occasional visits to Slovenia;

Circular (repeat) migration: the main feature of this migration is relatively long term residence abroad (sometimes in several different countries), repetitive, employment seeking movement and relatively regular patterns of returning home;

Daily migration: the main characteristic being daily commutes to a foreign country. The major target countries of our respondents were mainly Western European countries, in particularly, Austria and Germany.

According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (www.stat.si) **permanent migration** represent only a minor, almost negligible portion of all migration by Slovenians. The present case confirms this phenomenon. Out of the 22 people who were interviewed for this project, only one could be regarded as a permanent migrant. On the other hand, **circular migration** patterns are relatively common in Slovenia (about 3%-5% of total population according to Stat.si). Most of these migrants move abroad in order to seek employment and stay in a specific country in accordance with their employment contract. One in four of these migrants go to Austria and one in six to Germany (www.stat.si). Seven of our respondents were by self-report categorized as **circular migrants**. Their major motivation to go abroad was lack of job opportunities in Slovenia and improving their economic situation at home. The rest of the participants in our sample were daily commuters.

There were several trends that were discerned regarding informal networks among our respondents. In line with the findings from the above mentioned studies, our results showed that social networks assisted our respondents in various ways. One was with providing information about jobs in the host societies. For example, one of the interviewees who works in Austria during the week, but comes home over the weekend, told his story:

In 2013 I lost my job back home (in Slovenia) and I was registered as unemployed for 8 months. During that time I was going for all sorts of job interviews, but couldn't find any employment. In 2014 my friend told me about a job in Austria and I took it, mostly because of my financial problems. I wanted to stay and find work in Slovenia, but I just couldn't get it so I was forced to go... My job (installing industrial racking) in Austria is ok, but I like coming home. Usually I work for 5 days and then I go home (SLO_M_12).

In addition to job information, access to informal networking helped people find jobs. One of the respondents, for example recalled how his friend recommended him to his employer for a job position.

My main reason could be traced to the fact, that there were no jobs in Slovenia. In addition, I come from a small farm and you know, there is no money in that. When I was 29 I set myself an ultimatum, that if I don't get a job before I'm 30, I go abroad. Then I got a chance, with a little help from my friend, whose cousin was working for BMW in Germany and he got me a job... So, here's how I got this job? Easy, my friends told me about it and he also recommended me with his boss. I applied and was hired first for three months and then extended. At the moment I don't have full time job, but they keep extending my contract (SLO_M_02).

While another one related his experience of finding a job:

... my friend told me about this job. That's how these things go. Everybody I know, working like me (as a medic) got it the same way – somebody told them about the position, recommended them and that was it. Now when I think, it's almost impossible to get it any other way, formally, I mean.... (SLO_M_08).

He and the friend who recommended him commute daily from Slovenia to Austria and have even established a close friendship.

A few immigrants stated that they had managed to find their job through formal ways:

Here's my migration story: I'm employed in Austria as a nurse and I commute every day to work. I stay there only during my shift, meaning maximum 12 hours, and then I go back home. I decided to get a job abroad because I couldn't get a job in my profession back home... How did I get this job? I went to the Austrian employment office and applied. They invited me for an interview and I was one of 4 people from Slovenia. After 3 weeks they called me back, saying I can come to work for 2 months, you know some sort of a trial. Because they were satisfied with me they gave me full time employment. And two of those girls from the interview stayed too. (SLO_M_03)

While another respondent stated that although information on jobs was available through formal channels, he had to use informal networks in order to succeed in finding jobs.

In my experience it helped a lot because I knew somebody and he recommended me (for a job). It's important that you get the information informally (through networks), because you know that somebody is looking for something and he (the seeker) knows that you are his solution. When I was looking for a job on formal platforms and forums (employment agency) I was not that successful. (SLO_M_01)

Social networks assist immigrants even in their adjustment in the host societies. As the following example illustrates, they provide immigrants with information and experiences on living in host societies as well as psychological adjustment in these societies.

My friends abroad didn't really help me arranging my migration, but they helped a lot with information and experiences of living abroad. They had experiences working with different offices and agencies in Germany and that was helpful. It also helped me psychologically. My friend told me that the first 5 years are a catastrophe (living abroad) and that information put my problems during that time into perspective and it was easier for me. /.../ when I settled down, my girlfriend came after me and now we're living together here (in Germany) and I'm helping her to adjust. (SLO_M_03) (help with adjustment in the host societies)

3 CONCLUSION

This research has described case studies from four different countries in the SEE region, more particularly Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Slovenia. The study has highlighted the relationship between migrants and informal/formal practices. Several trends were found among the data:

In the case of Albania, the findings revealed that social networks assisted return migrant entrepreneurs in their endeavours of running their business, such as purchasing materials from Greece, reducing extra expenses. In addition, the study participants engaged in a certain degree of informality, such as avoiding formal Albanian labour laws (by not paying social security and health insurance payments), or avoiding paying custom fees for goods they buy in Greece. The reason for the circumvention of formal processes, in their view, was the inability to meet the expectations that the legal framework required for their businesses. Thus, while they operate within a formal legal structure, they have to resort to a certain degree of informality in order to sustain their business.

In the case of Kosovo, the Shehu family, who had fled the country as refugees and settled in US, upon return, built up a successful wine business venture, based on their family networks. Kosovo wine business reveal once again the interplay between formal and informal practices. While the enterprise operates within a legal framework, its success also relies on kin-labour force and informal social networks of clients.

The examples from Serbia also highlight the importance of informal social networks in assisting immigrants during their migration process, whether in terms of leaving the country or finding a job abroad. Like in the case of Albania, return Serbian migrant entrepreneurs use bribery in order to avoid formal rules and regulation. Similarly to Serbian migrants, in the case of Slovenia, informal networks assist people with information for jobs, finding a suitable job, arranging residence, as well as with the adjustment in the host societies.

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