Welcome Home?

Narratives of Macedonian Roma as Migrants and Deportees

By

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Abstract

This study provides a glimpse into the everyday lives of Macedonian Roma as migrants in European countries and deportees in Macedonia. I examine the social implications of the migration and deportation experience. Also, I look at their influence on the 'sense of belonging' to the Macedonian social structures. Through narrative analysis I found that 'belonging' for Macedonian Roma is a fluid construct which results from the intersection of 'home', 'other' and 'power'.

I make a comparison between three Macedonian Roma waves of migration to Western European countries. I argue that the experiences of Roma as asylum seekers are shaped through the European tendencies to separate this minority as 'non-belonging' to any state. The deportation of these migrants has contributed to furthering them from the Macedonian structures and with that reinforcing their sense of 'non-belonging'. The biggest wave of Roma migrants from the region, most of whom claimed asylum in Germany, was noted during the Yugoslav wars. The migration of Macedonian Roma to Western European countries is still present today. However, this study argues that there is a difference in the experiences of Macedonian Roma depending on the periods of migration.

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Introduction

The recent focus on Roma as a minority group in need of recognition and beneficial state policies sheds light on the problematic relationship that Roma have had with their countries of residence (Crowe 1995). The Decade of Roma Inclusion[1] was the first major international attempt to improve living conditions of Roma. Numbers show that Roma remain to be the most disadvantaged group in the continent (FRA 2016). Academics and policy makers agree that the normative approach in terms of research and policy making should not be used, or at least should be problematized when dealing with Roma issues (Agarin and Brosig 2009). One of those concepts, which will be analyzed in this paper, is that of 'home' as belonging to a certain place or to certain groups (minorities and majorities) living in the same territory.

Using narrative analysis, this thesis will examine how the experiences of migration and deportation influence Roma's sense of belonging. It will focus in particular on Macedonian Roma who had asked for asylum and were deported from a Western European country. Germany is taken as a sample country since the majority of my informants had migrated and claimed asylum there. Through this case, I am examining the understanding of home for the Macedonian Roma minority and I am analyzing the influence that the power relations and the othering processes have on the shaping of the same. The existing literature has not dealt with this issue which might imply that the concepts of 'home', 'power' and 'other' might seem self-explanatory or taken for granted by researchers.

My main argument is that Roma's 'feeling at home' is not the same as for other Macedonian citizens since Macedonian structures are limiting towards Roma, in terms of employment, education and health services (Friedman 2014). Othering of Roma and their

[1] The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) recognized as four priority areas the spheres of education, employment, health, and housing. The goal of the Decade was to close the gaps between Roma and non-Roma, support the participation of Roma communities and measure progress in this regard. Macedonia was one of the twelve countries to participate in the Decade (Bruggemman and Friedman 2017).

inability to act are due to the labeling practices present in Macedonia. However, as it will be further discussed, these practices are not present only in the Macedonian context, or only in the ex-Yugoslav countries. Labeling is accepted and practiced all over Europe, so recent migration from Macedonia to the well-established European countries, has not provided fruitful results in terms of searching for the 'feeling at home' (Cahn and Guild 2010, Kaya 2016).

Instead of putting Roma as an object of study in order to gain quantitative data, the goal of this paper is to give voice to the individuals, who until now have been reduced to numbers. It takes a different approach than the mainstream one which is focusing on the Roma minority as a problem for the majority, mere victims of the different political regimes, and subjects who are unable to assimilate or even integrate in the mainstream society (Bryant 2016). Instead, it applies a bottom-up approach and analyzes the narratives that the Roma deportees constructed by themselves in regards to their perceived place in society. With this in mind, I am not questioning the truthfulness of the narratives or their chronology. Instead I am looking at their construction[2] so that there will be a clearer understanding of how a Macedonian Roma narrative is shaped.

I am looking specifically at the Macedonian Roma because a Macedonian narrative will exclude their experiences as a minority group, whereas talking about a Roma narrative will lead to homogenizing European Roma. Although the experiences of exclusion and discrimination might be present in all of the European countries, Roma's status as an ethnic minority has developed differently in different countries. These shifts might have been from bad to worse, but they have to be examined accordingly. For Macedonian Roma, these shifts will be examined through their migration patterns to Western Europe and their deportation back to the country. These processes have been present since Macedonia's independence in

[2] The construction will be analyzed through the questions of: Why these stories were chosen to be shared at that exact moment? What influenced the construction of this story? and What preceded the story?

1991 however, there has been no attempt from the state institutions to help or even register the deported Roma.

Thesis outline

The introduction of this thesis provides an explanation of the research question, as well as methodological and historical overview. In the methodological overview I explain the profile of informants whose narrative I used for the purposes of this research. The historical background focuses on the Yugoslav context as a predecessor to the Macedonian context. Although the focus of this thesis is on Macedonia, the findings might be applicable to other countries in the ex-Yugoslav region. The first chapter is providing a theoretical overview of the concepts of 'belonging', 'home', 'power' and 'other', in order to conceptually frame the experiences of Macedonian Roma as migrants and deportees. The second and third chapters provide an empirical analysis of the narratives that I have gathered while being in the field. The second chapter will analyze the shifts in the migration status of Macedonian Roma, from Yugoslav refugees to 'false asylum seekers'. The third chapter will focus on Roma deportees and their reintegration in the Macedonian society. The goal of these chapters is to unravel the migration and deportation experiences of Macedonian Roma, their perceptions of home, the reasons as well as expectations from the migration process, and the coping mechanisms upon deportation. The conclusion will summarize the thesis and its findings, recognize the shortcomings of the provided analysis and leave open questions for further research.

Methodology

Coming from a family that fits the category of Macedonian Roma, deported from a Western European country (Germany), I was raised with glorifying stories of first, Yugoslavia and the socialist regime, and second the perfectly organized and "full of opportunities for everyone" European countries (Balkan countries excluded). Surprisingly, even if the same stories were told over and over again, there were always new details or

different aspects prevailing in every story telling. As a result, instead of conducting interviews, I gathered narratives of individuals who migrated with their families (spouse, children, and parents) and after claiming asylum were deported to Macedonia. Interviews, in my opinion, would limit the informants to matters that I perceive to be the most important. They might disregard stories that they find relevant for describing their whole experience.

For the purposes of this thesis, ten narratives were gathered from Macedonian Roma who migrated after 1991 and were deported from a Western European country. All of my informants migrated with their families (spouses and children). I must admit that I had underestimated the field, in the sense that I expected my informants to speak freely about their migration and deportation experiences. However, many of them stated that their experiences might be illegal (border crossing, working as asylum seekers) and were afraid to share their stories with a stranger who, as far as they know, might be collecting information for the government (a limitation which tells a lot about the trust that the people have in the state institutions). After reassuring them that their identities will be concealed and that their narratives will be used only for research purposes, and finally after sharing my family's deportation story, my informants felt much more comfortable to speak about their experiences. In this thesis, I am using initials that might not correspond with the first names of my informants in order to hide their identities.

Aside from the limited time and resources available, the most significant obstacle I faced in the field was not being able to speak the Romani language. Although all of my informants are fluent in Macedonian, there is a possibility that the Romani speaking individuals would have constructed a different narrative if speaking in Romani. Nonetheless, I consider these to be minor limitations which would not have a drastic impact on my findings.

The oral history interview can be considered, according to Alessandro Portelli as "text in the making, in that it can be subjected to narrative analysis which has to take into account the interviewee's search for words and continuous self-editing" (1998). Narratives can be used to understand what could cause an 'action' and to explore its occurrence (Griffin 1993). For the analysis, I am using a thematic approach, which means that I am putting more emphasis on "what" has been said, rather than "how" it was said. As Riessman explains, the thematic approach to narrative analysis is useful for finding common thematic elements among the research participants (2005).

Yugoslav migration - Historical overview

Literature shows that in spite of the fact that some regions and political climates were less hostile towards the – what was perceived to be – Roma "nomadic" lifestyle, this ethnic minority was always treated differently compared to the rest of the population (Crowe 1995). The position of Roma in the territory of socialist Yugoslavia was considered to be slightly better than in any other European country (Archer et al. 2016). The state provided securities, such as employment, health services, housing, and education for the children, made Roma feel more protected. Hate speech was also illegal and this sense of equality created the feeling of national identity i.e. belonging to the state (Lockwood 1986).

Yugoslav policies differentiated nations from nationalities, and nationalities from ethnic groups - after 1974 (Friedman 2014). 'Nations' was used to refer to the "peoples" of the states, 'nationality' to national minorities whereas ethnic groups to ethnic minorities (Friedman 2014). The last Yugoslav census of 1981 included the nations and national minorities, but not the ethnic ones, so ethnically segregated data is very difficult to be found[3]. The same issue arises while researching Yugoslav migration because the Roma migrants

[3] See Stankovic, Slobodan. 1982. *Yugoslavia's census – Final Results*. In Open Society Archives http://osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/pdf/85-4-120.pdf Accessed 31.05.2017

from the Socialist Republic of Macedonia simply blended with all of the Yugoslav migrants (Marushiakova and Popov 2010).

Yugoslav migrants had the opportunity to travel as labor migrants in other industrially developed European countries (Latham 1999). The networks that were formed in the 1970's and the migrants' success stories were and still are decisive for the choice of destination country for the Macedonian migrants (Cherkezova 2014:5). Although there is no ethnic data showing Yugoslav migration to Germany, my informants notified me that many Roma were using the employment opportunities to move with their families to Germany. One of my informants shared with me the story of her cousin who, with his wife and two teenage daughters, decided to move to Germany.

> At that time [1980's] you could go to the unemployment office and find advertisements to work in Germany. And it was much easier to go. They were letting everyone. They knew us [people from Yugoslavia] as hard workers… My cousin went with his wife and two daughters. They received an apartment, their daughters started school. The wife finished medical school here [in Macedonia] so she was working in a hospital there. As a nurse. And he was a tram driver. Whenever I would visit his mother, she would play me the cassettes (VHS tapes) that they were sending. How they celebrated New Year's, how they visited relatives. They were coming every summer. But here wasn't so bad either. We had the same that they had… – V's story – 1st wave migrant

According to my informants, life in Germany seemed as an attractive opportunity, but they did not see the need for migrating or working in a foreign country, before the Yugoslav wars. The fall of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia started in 1990, and became official in 1991. With the collapse of the socialist regime Roma were among the first to lose their employment which resulted in the social construction of Roma as an underclass (Szelenyi and Ladanyi 2006). The (now) democratic states in the ex-Yugoslav region did not have the need for unskilled laborers, such as the Roma, for whom the states did little to nothing to help them adjust to the new regime. Roma were pushed into the margins and

labeled lazy or incompetent, since they were not allowed to keep up with the emerging capitalist trends (Crowe 1995, O'Higgins 2015).

Unlike the other countries of the region, Macedonia was the only one which managed to proclaim sovereignty in a peaceful way (Gorsevski and Hastings 2004). However, people from the country used the war conflicts to claim asylum as refugees in developed European countries. During the wars, Germany hosted the largest amount of refugees coming from the region, approximately 400.000 (Kamm 1992). People who reached Germany were sharing their success stories, which contributed to the increase of the number of migrants. Even today, the reputation of Germany as a "dream country" within the Roma community remains (Turudic 2009, Gezer 2012).

Chapter one: Theoretical Framework

The sense of belonging can be understood through two conceptual frames. The first one is through the legal literature on citizenship as a marker for belonging to a certain geographical location. The concept is constituted of "legal status, rights and political and other forms of participation in society" (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008). The feeling of belonging to a certain country or to a certain place does not necessarily coincide with one's citizenship status. One may identify with the country that he/she lives in, but they might 'not belong' in the sense of being accepted or being a full member (Anthias 2006). Acceptance in this paper is examined through the exclusion rather than inclusion practices. The inclusion practices as an attempt to integrate minority groups in the mainstream and reach social cohesion, in current debates have been discussed as a new form of "assimilationism" (Rattansi 2004). Although social cohesion calls for accepting difference in order to achieve inclusion, the 'others' have to accept and conform to the mainstream hegemonic norms (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005).

The second one, which is a detailed elaboration on what strengthens one's sense of belonging and which will be used in this thesis, is looking at the preconditions for quality of life and the expectations that individuals have of their home society - social inclusion, wellbeing, social cohesion (Anthias 2006). The quality of life for Roma in Macedonia has proven to be on a much lower level compared to the majority and other ethnic minorities in the country. Issues of housing, health, education and employment seem to affect mostly the Roma minority (BTI 2016). This combined with the labeling practices present in everyday life in Macedonia results in lack of sense of belonging within the Roma minority.

I use 'belonging' as a feeling of having a rightful place in society. The societies in question are the Macedonian as a home country and Germany as a receiving country, whereas

the ‘place in society’ will be examined for Roma through their experiences with ‘home’, ‘power’ and ‘other’.

Because of the perception of the concept of belonging as a feeling, many authors have taken the notion for granted. Belonging has often been used as opposed to non-belonging (Southerton 2002) and the studies that have dealt with analyzing belonging in place do not explain its sociological importance (Edwards 1998, Rogaly and Taylor 2009).

Studies that deal with the sense of belonging have usually a limited conception of place as a passive context for social life (Gieyrn 2000). Massey suggests, we “view of places as constantly shifting articulations of social relations through time” (1995, 188). In the same geographical place, identities and borders are subject to change. The Macedonian territory, as a place, has been subject to many social changes in recent history (Friedman 2014). These social changes are analyzed in terms of the migration and deportation processes of Macedonian Roma.

Dupuis and Thorns argue that ‘home’ is connected to personal identity or status and/or is a source of personal and familial security (1996). Home has also been examined in terms of family, where the family members share a physical space and have clearly divided responsibilities based on their gender (Hunt 1995). The traditional Western understanding of home has been as a "physical entity - a house or a caravan, a cottage or a flat" (Bowlby et al., 1997: 344).

I will use Saunders and Williams’ definition of home as ‘simultaneously and indivisibly a spatial and a social unit of interaction’ (1988). They see home as a geographical location in which social relations and social structures are being built and reproduced (Saunders and Williams 1988). Also, they argue that the physical components of the home (location, size) can enable and constrain ones’ actions (Saunders and Williams 1988). Other

authors have also argued that the physical sphere is one aspect of the concept of home (Bowlby et al. 1997, Somerville 1989, Wardaugh 1999).

'Feeling at home' is examined by Van der Graaf who provides a sociological approach to 'feelings' (2009). He states that emotions in general are poorly examined by sociologists because so far they have not been dealt with as social constructs or they do not result in a powerful reaction (2009). To connect emotions and home he draws on Soja who examines space not as a passive arena, but as an active construct filled with politics and ideology (2009).

Acquiring power and searching for that 'feeling at home' explains the high number of Roma seeking asylum in Europe, especially Germany. If we assume that power relations also contribute to the perception that one might have about their home, how is it that Roma were (and still are) not able to exercise power in any sphere of social life in Macedonia? The existence of Roma political parties in Macedonia might imply that the situation of Roma is much better than in other countries in the region. However, there are no guaranteed seats for Roma or any other ethnic minorities in the parliament. The election of one or two Roma MPs out of 123 over the years has left Roma significantly underrepresented. Also, the elected Roma MPs have not been very successful at raising Roma issues in parliamentary debate (Pajic 2012).

When unraveling power relations it might be useful to analyze the concepts of agency and structure. In short, agency represents the ability of individuals to act freely and independently, whereas structure refers to the prescribed social patterns which dictate groups and individual behavior (Barker and Jane 2005). Many authors have dealt with these concepts in their writing and have argued their importance and the influence that one has over the other. Although there have been attempts to examine the concepts as mutually dependent, it is visible that the authors usually favor one of the concepts. These contributions have come

from Berger and Luckman with the theory of social construction of reality (1966), Parsons with the theory of social action and pattern variables (1977), Bourdieu with the theory of practice and habitus (1977), and Giddens with the structuration theory (1984). In this thesis I focus on the complementary nature of the two concepts, examining not only how structures shape experiences, but also how Roma exert their agency within the social structures.

The third concept that I will use throughout my analysis is that of 'other' which has mostly been used in postcolonial literature (Said 1995) and in literature regarding gender (Beauvoir 1989) and race (Hall 1996). Othering can be defined as the "process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between 'us' and 'them' – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained" (Lister 2004: 101). The Others are subject of labels which in the end might be also assumed as standards of behavior (Riggins 1997: 9). Poverty is prescribed to the Roma minority as an unavoidable biological characteristic. Begging, stealing, deviant behavior, early marriages, big families are only some of the traits attributed to the Roma minority.

Lewis elaborates on the idea that the institutions have repressed the poor to the level where poverty, and the cultural traits that it brings, is transferred generationally, from parents to children (1966). According to Lewis's concept of 'culture of poverty' not every poor individual or family lives by the characteristics described by this concept (1966). The poor surrounded by other people with the same economic background do not have many opportunities to socialize with people from different social statuses. Therefore, they lack cultural capital which influences their employment opportunities. Since in the countries with a communist/socialist past, the rate of unemployment is on a very high level, employees and workers are told to be content with the wage they are earning without further complaints which puts Roma in an extremely uncomfortable situation (Czismady 2003).

The exclusion of Roma exceeds different regimes and economic conditions (Barany 1994). Roma have been living in Macedonia long before the country's independence in 1991 and their social position has been gradually changing throughout this time (Crowe 1995). One of the reasons for this might be that Roma could not fit in any of the already defined categories and as Douglas states people are in need of "hard lines and clear concepts", everything outside of this pattern might be perceived as "polluted, dangerous and powerful" (1966:162).

Chapter two: Shifts in the migrants' status – From Yugoslav refugees to 'false asylum seekers'

The transition from Socialist Republic of Macedonia to Republic of Macedonia resulted in changes of social structures which affected all of the Macedonian citizens, especially Roma (Sardelic 2014). The feeling of security that the Yugoslav state was providing to its citizens in terms of employment and education started decreasing among the Roma population in the Macedonian state (Barany 2002). Ethnic labels which were disregarded (or not so present) in Yugoslavia, started surfacing in the new Macedonian state. As a result, the Roma minority was pushed to the margins of society. To this day the majority of Roma remains unemployed and education among Roma is on a much lower level compared with other ethnic groups. Furthermore, in neighborhoods mostly inhabited by Roma citizens, health services are hard to come by and labeling of Roma is present in everyday life, as seen in the mainstream media (ERTF 2015).

The shift to democracy caused changes in social expectations and understanding of social structures (Sardelic 2014). Uncertainty about the future became more present and the search for a new home resulted in big waves of Macedonian Roma migrants to the economically stable European countries (Cherkezova 2014). However, the asylum seeking experience of Roma has mostly been shaped through the European tendencies of confining Roma to the margins of society as Europe's "others" (Kaya 2016). Depending on the period of migration, Macedonian Roma have been gradually shifting from deserving to undeserving immigrants.

This chapter will unravel the process of migration of Macedonian Roma to Western European countries. It will explore the road and arrival of Roma to their desired destination, the process of settling and relationship with the others in the receiving state through employment and education. Most of my informants however were seeking asylum in

Germany. The narratives of my informants can be divided in three periods of migration. The first period started in the early 90's with the Yugoslav wars and ended with the Dayton peace agreement[4] in 1995. I term the period from 1995 until 2009 as second wave of migration although during this period the number of asylum seekers was much lower due to the visa requirements for Macedonian citizens. The third wave started in 2009 and is still ongoing when Macedonia entered the Schengen zone and visa-free travel was made possible for Macedonian citizens[5].

2.1 Reaching the desired destination

Usually, my informants were starting their narratives with an elaborate description of how the road to the desired country looked like.

> When I got pregnant, my husband told me to go. We already had a five year old son. We contacted the relatives that we had there. They were more than happy to help us. They just asked for the time and place where we will arrive. They said that they will come to get us. We notified our families, got our savings and started our trip. We had no idea where we were going or what to expect…Everyone was leaving. That is why we left. Not because we were scared, not because we were jobless, but because everyone was gone. In November 1991, we went to Belgrade. My husband had an aunt there so we arranged to meet on the bus station. The plan was to buy immediately tickets and to continue with the trip. But it didn't happen that way. We wanted to get a bus to Munich but it was full. It later turned out that we were lucky, because the bus was stopped at the border and they weren't allowed to pass. Even the train that was going every day from Athens to Munich was full. Can you imagine such a big train being full? So we got tickets for the next day, for Frankfurt…no, it was Vienna first and then we had to catch another train to Frankfurt. They told us to remember. Westbahnhof. And you see? I still remember. We went to the aunt's house and spent the night there. Very early the next morning we went to the train station… I was so scared because I heard a man shouting 'they stole my passport', I thought the same might happen to us. You know what a Yugoslav passport was worth back then? You could go wherever you wanted with it. I grabbed my child and placed him next to me, while looking at my husband who was guarding the passports and the

[4] The Dayton agreement is the peace agreement reached at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, United States, in November 1995, and formally signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. These accords put an end to the three and a half year-long Bosnian War, one of the armed conflicts in the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. See http://www.osce.org/bih/126173

[5] Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement - http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32009R12442

> money. It was scary, until we reached the Hungarian border. The border guards looked very scary. They were very tall and big, and very serious looking, but they didn't ask us any questions. They just took their time looking at the passport picture of my son. They needed to make sure that it's the same boy. And then we continued at ease …- V's story – 1st period migrant

Three things caught my attention is this excerpt. First, V focuses on the family members that had helped them in the migration process. In many of the narratives, especially from this wave, my informants bring out the importance of having family members abroad that would help them upon arrival. None of my informants had left without arranging to meet with their relatives since many of them did not know what was waiting for them. The second focus is on the presentation of the amount of migrants as to present the gravity of the situation. Since Yugoslavia was a war zone at that time, my informants were always stating that they were on the road with thousands of refugees. And third, the way V presents the reputation that Yugoslavia enjoyed in the world. This pride while talking about Yugoslavia, was present in all of my informant's stories.

> In 1993… We decided with my wife and my two year old daughter to go to Germany. Many people were saying that it is easy to find employment there. And the economic conditions were much better in Germany. But, we heard that they brought a new law which stated that asylum seekers from Macedonia will not be accepted. They realized that the war will not go south and that Macedonians are safe. But we found an agency which was arranging transportation to Germany… when we reached the Hungarian border they didn't let us pass. They told us to return. We started panicking, but the driver knew what he had to do. They were well connected… they told us about the border crossing. They had arranged for us to get out of the vehicle before we reach the border, and to cross the border at night, on foot, through the forest, illegally .We didn't know what to do. But we were almost there. We couldn't come back now. We came so far. So we agreed. Although we knew that there is military on the border, which has the right to shoot us on sight, we agreed to go. It was so scary. Can you imagine how I felt when I had to say to my two years old 'you mustn't cry now. If you cry we will be in trouble'. It was horrible. If we knew that this was a plan B, we would never start the trip... It was horrifying. And on top of that, they didn't even take us to the city that we agreed. They left us to mend for ourselves. Luckily I could speak some German, so we managed to get a taxi and go to my sister's house. She lives there. With her husband... – F's story – 1st wave migrant

F on the other hand focuses on the employment opportunities in Germany and the well organized crime circles in Macedonia that were taking advantage of desperate people. The fact that they were fleeing from a war zone cannot be disregarded, however according to my informants employment and economic conditions were the main reasons for migration of Macedonian Roma. The news about illegal border crossing were shocking for F since as a Yugoslav citizen he would never have trouble crossing the state border.

> Before I lost my job, I was able to get a visa for one entry in the Schengen zone. I went with my wife and two children to visit my brother in France. After some weeks in France, we went to Germany, to my cousin. But he warned me that they are returning asylum seekers from Germany and he convinced me that Sweden is much better, that people were satisfied with the work and salaries that they were receiving. So we wanted to see for ourselves. We didn't have anything waiting for us in Macedonia anyway...- M's story – 2nd wave migrant

The difference among narratives is more than visible. While people migrating in the beginning of 90's were leaving their work positions (which they might have lost anyway later on), the wave of Roma migrants that followed did not have much to look forward to in Macedonia. The family members and success stories regarding employment still played a big role in the migration decision process. Since in this period traveling without a visa was impossible, as M states having evidence of employment was crucial for being eligible for a visa.

> My daughter is married in Germany. So she invited all of us to visit. Me, my wife and my son. In 2012? 13? Five years ago, so 2012. First I couldn't get a passport… the lady working at the ministry said 'you might go somewhere and claim asylum'. I got so angry. I asked her 'how can you know if I will ask for asylum' and she just waved her hand showing that she doesn't want to continue the conversation and wants me to leave… another woman who was working there came up to me and asked me what the problem was. I told her what her colleague had told me and she asked me to come back in a few days and to go straight in her office. She personally would give me the passport… We didn't have problems at the border. I know that many people do, but they didn't say anything to us…- X's story – 3rd wave migrant

X's story provides an insight in the most recent wave of migration. He focuses on the relationship of Roma with the state institutions and the racial profiling of Roma on the

Macedonian borders. The visa liberalization in 2009 for Macedonian citizens was followed with a big wave of Roma migrants to Germany, as well as the rest of the economically stable European countries (Cherkezova and Tomova 2013, ESI 2015).

The excerpts of narratives provided above present the importance of family networks and their success stories for the migration process. Also, they show the shift from Yugoslav to Macedonian context where in the first they show a sense of pride in their national belonging whereas in the second they perceive the Macedonian citizenship as a limitation. The ethnic tensions that rose from the Yugoslav wars after the 1990's, were followed with the plight of national recognition. Roma were left out from every nation in the region (Tanner 2004). Although they were citizens of the countries which implied that they can enjoy the same rights and privileges as every other country resident, Roma were gradually pushed to the margins of society (Sardelic 2014). This notion is also reflected in the relationship of the Macedonian state institutions towards Roma. Although the numbers were not as high as they were in the period before 1995, Roma migrants could be found slipping through the country's borders.

In the third wave of migration the term Roma, used to describe an ethnic minority, soon became a label to describe 'false asylum seekers'. After the visa liberalization European countries, mostly Germany, Belgium and Sweden witnessed a wave of Macedonian and Serbian asylum seekers (UNHCR 2011). The countries were warned that the visa liberalization would be abolished if the number of asylum seekers does not decrease (ESI 2013). As a result, the government measures for dealing with the high number of Roma asylum seekers consisted of stricter borderline security, but only for Roma, enacting a law that made seeking asylum in a European country without "solid proof" a crime, and amended the Law on Travel Documents which allowed officials to revoke people's passports and refuse to issue passports (Hartley 2014). The racial profiling at the borders just proved that

the opinion of the public was that ethnic Macedonians are traveling as tourists, while Roma citizens would claim asylum upon arrival in the desired country. Of course, there were ethnic Macedonians who were claiming asylum and Roma who were traveling for holidays, but the State practices showed that the categories have been made very clear and the Roma ethnicity became a tool for labeling.

2.2 Experiences as asylum seekers in Western Europe

Once in Germany, my informants had all different experiences as asylum seekers. All of them were admitted to refugee centers, and only a few of them could get a transfer to an apartment. As I realized from the narratives, the chances of receiving a transfer to an apartment or finding employment opportunities were much higher for Roma migrating as Yugoslav refugees in the first than in the third wave.

> My aunt was able to recommend me to her friends who needed someone to clean their apartments. It was only once per week. They were very satisfied with my work and trusted me. I was cleaning three apartments. They were never there to supervise me. If they needed something extra, they would leave me a note, which I would read out through the phone to my aunt. I still didn't know German. Once I had to wait for a repair man to fix something in the house and as a thank you present, the lady bought me a juicer. They were all very nice with me. I could even bring my children with me… – P's story, 1st wave migrant

P also highlights the importance of family networks in acquiring employment and gaining the trust of her employers. From the excerpt it seems that it was very easy to get in touch with the local population. It can be easily concluded that these employers were not low class members of the society.

> "…We went to register in the center. They took our statements, they took pictures of us, we got a free medical checkup and they gave us a room in the center… After some time, I saw that they were looking for someone to work in the kitchen. I was among the first to apply for the position. I liked working there. I knew that it was temporary, but at least I had something". – F's story – 1st wave migrant

F's family did not receive transfer to an apartment however, in her narrative she portrays the relationship of the state towards the Yugoslav refugees. In the first two waves of migration, my informants were mostly satisfied by the housing and health services provided by the state.

> I found employment in a printing house. They were printing books and my job was to clean up the paper after them. Most of the people were Polish. Through one of them I managed to find another job. I was working three jobs at the same time. But I enjoyed it. I was earning enough money to live well with my family, but also to leave something aside. My relatives were always criticizing me. 'You should be more careful, you shouldn't work so hard'. But I couldn't just stay home and do nothing. There was work, so I wanted to work… – U's story – 2nd wave migrant

The second wave migrants, who were transferred from a refugee center to an apartment, were still able to acquire job positions. The difference here is that U's network was consisting of low skilled migrant laborers. It might be a specific case, but if U's statement is true, this means that the working rates were much lower than in the first wave migrants' cases.

> We were in a small town in Sweden. After three weeks they gave us an apartment in a building with other asylum seekers. I was searching for employment, but there were no employment opportunities. My children were attending lessons for Swedish language and were about to start attending school before we returned. The municipality was organizing courses for the children, not to be so behind with school materials since they were not attending formal school. – M's story, 2nd wave migrant

M, as mentioned earlier, was advised to go to Sweden because of the employment opportunities that could be found there, but he could not acquire a job position. However, he claims that he was satisfied with the state provided services and the efforts of the municipality to accommodate his children.

M's daughter, who was ten at the time, remembers how challenging it was for her to adapt to the new surroundings:

> I started going to school to learn the language. I don't remember how I was communicating with the people there. A bit in English, a bit in Spanish. We had also other courses but they were too basic. I already knew everything in

> the math classes. I was going to the library every day with my father. I was reading books, magazines. I was using the computers there all the time and everyone was surprised how an asylum seeker could use a computer. Afterwards I started bringing my friends along.

M's family spent two years in Sweden waiting for the asylum decision, but his children did not start attending formal schools. The state was providing language courses for the children, but for the other courses the children were not divided accordingly, which resulted in a stop in M's daughter's education. Another interesting thing that M's daughter reveals in her narrative is the relationship with the locals. Although, she does not mention any hostility from the local population, she focused on the surprised reaction that the people had when she was using a computer. This implies that the locals have an imagined knowledge for the asylum seekers and base their expectations on it.

> We arrived at the train station and I wanted to ask for directions. I approached a woman who was waiting for some train and I said 'Entschuldigung. Diese straße? [Excuse me. This street?]' showing her the piece of paper on which I had written the address. She started shouting at me 'Raus! Ausslander Raus! [Out! Immigrant out!]'. It was actually funny now that I think of it. – X's story, 3rd wave migrant

The third wave migrants' experiences are much more different from the first and second wave migrants. My informants who had migrated in this period did not manage to receive a transfer to an apartment so their asylum seeking experience is based in the refugee camps in Germany. The relationship with the 'others' has worsened over the years and his reaction of amusement implies that he does not consider this encounter to be so rare. The differences in the relationship with the 'others' can best be described by people who had migrated to Germany during the first period of migration and returned during the third wave of migration.

> When we were the first time [1991], they gave us a separate room. You had your privacy. But when we were now, in 2014, they didn't have place for us, so the first night we slept in a church. On the ground. Afterwards, they gave us a room which we shared with two other families. In the end they put us in a house. One room was for me, my wife and my child, the other two were for other families. My wife was cleaning all the time after them... We didn't want

> to return on our own. We decided to wait for the asylum decision, but we were hoping that we will be deported. We couldn't live like this. In Macedonia it really is bad, but at least I have my people around me. Here, I couldn't even communicate with the people. And when I did, I got in trouble. I asked one of the men that was living in the house with us to lend me his bicycle. I wanted to go with my family around the town. When the police saw us on the road they stopped us and wanted to check if the bicycle was stolen. I was convincing them that I haven't done anything wrong. And what do you think happened? The bicycle was really stolen. I started panicking. I told them that I had borrowed the bicycle but they didn't believe me. I told them the name and surname of the man who gave it to me. Somehow they let me go. When I arrived in the house I had a big fight with the man. How could he give me a bicycle without telling me that it's stolen? And then they say that our people are thieves. I saw many of our people there. They were in the same situation as us. Some of them didn't want to complain, some, like us, were hoping to get deported. We didn't want to admit that we failed. – L's story – 3rd wave (returning) migrant

Through L's story, many different aspects of the third wave migrant experience can be analyzed. First he notes the difference in the state provided services. With the high number of refugees seeking asylum in Germany, separate housing has become a luxury. Sharing accommodation with other asylum seekers proves to be problematic. Second, he and his family would rather be deported than return willingly to Macedonia and admit failure. Third, the local authorities have become more cautious around asylum seekers. The fact that they stopped L on the suspicion that the bicycle that he is using is stolen proves the labeling practices used throughout Europe. Fourth, through his statement '*And then they say that our people are thieves'* L is referring to the labels attached to the Roma minority and through the actions of "others" tries to dismantle the stereotypes.

The excerpts of the narratives provided in this sub-chapter show the relationship of the asylum seekers with the 'others' in different period of migration. The first wave migrants were the most successful in acquiring work positions and receiving transfers to apartments. All of them were satisfied with the state provided services and had more contact with the local population than in any other period before. The experiences of second wave migrants portray the shifts in the relationship with the 'others'. The ones who were able to find work

opportunities, were mostly surrounded by other low skilled laborers. Family ties were not so evident in the narratives on employment. The sphere of education was not well organized and as a result children were out of the education system for years at a time. The narratives from the third wave however prove to be completely different from the previous two. My informants' experiences included hostility from the local population and authorities, poor state provided services and a need to disprove the existing labels for Roma by pointing to the criminal behavior of 'others'.

Phrases like "*it was known*" or "*everyone was telling good things about Germany*" were used very often by my informants during their narratives. When I would question their statements as in 'how was it known' or 'who is everyone' they could not provide a clear answer. Usually the information that they had was due to someone else's success story. Some of them had the opportunity to witness life in Germany first hand while visiting family members and the information that they had acquired there was shared back in Macedonia. Others were familiar with everyday life in Germany through family members that had already migrated there and were keeping in touch through telephone, letters or even VHS tapes and nowadays social media. I realized that the success stories were so embedded in everyday life in Macedonia, that when the opportunity presented itself, a high number of Roma were not hesitant to migrate to Germany.

The sense of belonging of Roma to the Yugoslav state was much stronger than the belonging to the Macedonian state (Marushiakova and Popov 2010). As Yugoslavs, my informants considered themselves to be respected members of society. Roma simply blended in with the rest of the migrants from the region. In the second and especially in the third wave of migration, the Macedonian state does not take responsibility for its Roma citizens and instead uses labels against them. The labeling practices have been noted in other European countries as well (Kaya 2016).

Gans makes a distinction between terms and labels, the distinction being that labels are used to stigmatize and have always negative connotation, whereas terms are used to provide an appropriate description (1995). Gans states that in most of the cases the labels force the labeled to act in the way that is prescribed to them by the majority (1995). However, as Moldenhawer notes the so called successful people, the people that do not fit the predetermined way of life, are usually seen as exemptions to the rule instead of a contribution to the destruction of the accepted label (2014).

On his account on the dangers that come with labeling, Gans offers reasoning on the majority's treatment of the minority in order to keep the existing hierarchical order. The contradiction that derives from labeling the "undeserving" poor is that even though there are many employment opportunities for all the citizens of the respective country, the poor, especially the Roma poor, do not want to use the opportunities provided to them and rather choose to live of social benefits. As Gans states, labeling in many cases becomes an obstacle for the poor to escape poverty (1995). Since the existing labels influence the attitude that the non - poor have about the poor (in this case the non Roma about the Roma), it is more likely employers not to offer position to a Roma applicant because of the imagined knowledge that the employer has of his or her ethnicity i.e. his/her capabilities. With this in mind, it is expected of the Roma minority to end the cycle of poverty while being discriminated by every institution that they come across.

Chapter three: Boundaries of Belonging – Macedonian Roma deportees

The migration experiences proved to differ for my informants depending on the period of migration. However, their deportation and reintegration experiences have not been subject to change in the past twenty six years, except in the sphere of education[6]. I argue that the act of deportation and the lack of state interest to help re-integrate the deportees reinforces the othering of Roma in Macedonian social structures.This chapter will focus on the experiences of deportees in the sphere of education.

The first and second wave narratives are provided by parents and children who were at a school age at the time of deportation. For the third wave, I conducted an interview with one of the experts in the field, Zhaklina Durmis, who explained the issues that the deportees are facing in the formal education. The sphere of education has noted an improvement in the third wave deportation due to the efforts of the NGO sector. The state provided a program[7] in 2010 which recognised the spheres of legal help and personal documentation, social protection, employment, education and heath to be the most pressing issues that deportees are facing. But seven years later, nothing has been implemented.

As for the employment opportunities upon return, all of my informants returned in Macedonia without having arranged previously their employment and they are either still jobless or work minimum waged jobs. Among the most common professions for my informants are cleaning staff, sewing factories, seasonal construction work and bazaar vendors. Also, there are the individuals who possessed certain skills that allowed them to

[6] Until 2008, only primary education was compulsory in Macedonia. Afterwards, primary and secondary education are obligatory and free for all Macedonian citizens. See *Law for Primary Education. Закон за основното образование*. Available at: http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2012/libraries/mk/Law%20on%20Primary%20Education.pdf

[7] See Government of Republic of Macedonia. 2010. *Program for help and support in the reintegration process of returnees in the Republic of Macedonia in accordance with the readmission agreements*. Влада на Република Македонија, Програма за помош и поддршка при реинтеграција на повратници во Република Македонија согласно реадмисионите договори. Available at: http://www.migrantservicecentres.org/userfile/pdf

work independently (electricians, repair staff, house painters). The latter could return to their jobs much easier upon arrival in Macedonia.

Another field that has not been changed throughout the years is the problem of housing. If they were missing for a longer period of time, in most cases my informants who had been homeowners, needed time to readjust their houses and make them adequate for living (with running water and electricity). Some, who did not own property before migrating managed to purchase apartments with their savings. None of them were offered with accommodation by the state.

3.1 (re)Admission of Roma children in formal education – first and second wave deportees

The New Yorker recently published an article which examines a problem that has so far been unique for Sweden (or has at least been recognized there) (Aviv 2017). It describes a comatose state which is affecting children or youngsters after they hear that their family's request for asylum has been denied and they have to return to their home country. The first cases have been noted in the early 2000's and a vast number of these children are in fact Roma (Aviv 2017). Although some might argue that this syndrome is just a method used by families to avoid deportation, the Swedish authorities as well as medical institutions have recognized the "resignation syndrome" to be a severe issue. "The patients seem to have lost their will to live" (Aviv 2017). As the author further explains, the families that have been deported with a child (or children) suffering from this syndrome have still not recovered in their home countries.

There have been no public cases like these in Macedonia, but the feelings of shock, fear, anxiety is common among all of the children of asylum seekers that have spent longer time in some European country. And of course, these feelings do not affect only children, but adults as well.

When the Yugoslav refugees were deported, the Macedonian state was not ready to readmit the children that had lost years of formal education or children who did not speak the language (Durmis and Mitanovski 2016).

> We were back in October and my son was 10. He was attending school in Germany. He was in the fourth grade there. He didn't speak Macedonian at all. Only German. So when we came back in Macedonia, I went to talk with the principal of the elementary school close to my parents' house. He called also one of the teachers and I explained them the situation. The teacher said 'It's very easy to put him in the first grade, but it wouldn't cost us anything to see if he will manage in the fourth grade. If after a while I see that there is no progress, you can put him in the first grade'. And so, he started going to school in the fourth grade. He didn't understand anything. He had the knowledge, but he didn't know how to speak. When they had exams he was always coming home crying. He used to have straight A's in Germany. And now, although his tests were for F, they would give him a passing grade, to motivate him. But that wasn't enough for him. He wanted to be the best. It was very hard until he learned the language… – V's story – 1st wave migrant

The success stories of my informants who were at a school age at the time of the deportation are due to the willingness of a certain teacher to closely follow the student's performance at school, or the connections that their parents had i.e. friends in influential positions who managed to arrange preferential treatment for the children. This preferential treatment includes enrolling the child in the grade fitting to its age, or allowing the child to re-enroll by losing one year (instead of two).

> When we left, I just started the third grade, and when we came back my generation was already in the sixth grade. So, I had missed out three whole years of my education. I started the fifth grade. I had school documents from Sweden, but they were stating that I was learning only the language. The only possibility for enrollment was to start in the 5th grade and not in the 6th because from the 5th grade there are many new subjects and I couldn't lose that year. There was no procedure assigned from the state to determine how to continue my education. So it was my father's responsibility to find a way…The teachers in the school accepted me in the fifth grade. My Macedonian was not excellent. I had forgotten many things about grammar. But the advantage was that we were speaking in Macedonian with my family. I had some difficulties with studying in the beginning, but my parents and my neighbor who is a teacher were helping. She explained me several times how to study and how to understand the material. I still remember how she was explaining biology to me through a scheme. And from that moment on I didn't have any problems. The first time that I was examined in history, I was

> following what everyone was doing. Most of my classmates were not answering because they didn't know, so I did the same. In our first test in Macedonian language, I received a B, which is a good grade. And the teacher praised me in front of the whole class. Although I had been away for so long my test was very well written. It was very strange for me in the beginning and I didn't want to go to school. I didn't want anyone to ask me questions about Sweden, like why and how we went, because I didn't want to talk about it. I was careful how I was communicating with others because I didn't want them to have some false image about me. I wanted first to have good results, so I could get more relaxed with people and to be understood in a good way. My GPA was 5.00… - M's daughter, 2nd wave migrant

Today, M's daughter and V's son are very successful in their respective fields. They did not only finish secondary education, but graduate and post-graduate studies as well. The encouragement and support that they received from their families and the school staff proved to be crucial in their re-admission in the formal education.

3.2 (re)Admission of Roma children in formal education - third wave deportees

When a child is at a school age upon deportation to Macedonia, he/she is obliged to start attending formal education. However, the schools are not prepared for (re)admission of deported children. There are no state organized programs to help children learn the Macedonian language (for those who do not speak it), there are no tests to determine the child's needed level of education so the (re)admission of children in school remains to be a private process where the school staff acts as the main agent (Durmis and Mitanovski 2016).

One of the few experts on the topic is the founder of Dendo Vas[8], Zhaklina Durmis, who states that the government has shown interest in acquiring data and assisting the deported Roma migrants, but nothing has been done so far. In the interview that I conducted with her, she reveals that one of the main problems that the deportees have to deal with is the readmission of their children, who are at a school age, in the formal education. Another problem is the lack of programs dealing with children deportees which would help them cope

[8] Dendo Vas is a non-governmental association center for educational support of children. Currently there are two active education centers in municipalities in Skopje, Macedonia. The centers realize projects for Roma children in the spheres of education and culture.

with the lost school materials. This responsibility is prescribed to the parents who not only have to work with their children but have to actively search for jobs.

Durmis has been dealing with education issues of Roma since 1998 and in 2002 she founded one of the *Dendo Vas* education center in the Dame Gruev neighborhood in Skopje, which is inhabited by ethnic Macedonians, Serbs and Roma. She states that the education system as it is, is not suitable for Roma children, especially for those who live in a 'segregated' neighborhood surrounded only by their culture (including language). When these children start school they get in touch with a different culture and have to use a vocabulary that is unfamiliar for them. The schoolbooks are complicating the issue even further. Many of the official schoolbooks use stereotypes, and in some of them even the word "cigan[9]" can be found which afterwards justifies the usage of this label by teachers and the other children.

'Dendo Vas' provides activities for pre-school children (aged four to seven), as well as elementary school students from the first until the seventh grade. The center does not only help children cope with school materials in subjects like Macedonian language, mathematics, foreign languages (English, French), but they also provide lessons in Romani language and Roma history. Durmis shared with me examples of school staff who had acquired their knowledge of the Roma minority either through broadly accepted stereotypes or through discriminatory "documentaries" like "The Champions of Shutka" where Roma people are portrayed as pariah people. The education center teaches students the Roma history so they can use it further on as a defense mechanism or as a tool to educate their teachers. In a way, the center serves as a school and family extension. Since many of the parents of the Roma children, did not have good experiences in the educational system and with that have not acquired the knowledge to help their children with the studying process, or have to work extremely demanding, low wage jobs to provide for their families, they might not have

[9] In Macedonia the label "cigan" is used as the label "gypsy" is used in the English language. It is considered to have negative connotation

sufficient time or knowledge to help their children. From another side, the additional classes provided by the school have proved to be unproductive because the teachers focus on the materials that are taught at the moment in the school and do not serve to explain previous materials with which the children have difficulties.

Aside from providing educational activities for the children, the center serves as a mediator between the school and the child's family. They keep track of the children's GPA and act fast if they notice a decrease in their grades. So far, the municipal school has been very cooperative and they have not stumbled across any difficulties from their side. However, the issue of readmission of deportees has proven to be very challenging. As it was mentioned above, there is no official examination of the deported children that will determine the necessary grade of the child. According to Durmis, practice shows that children are automatically placed in the grade that they were attending before migration. Since there are no state programs to help children cope with the lost materials, the center has taken it as their responsibility to prepare the children as well as their families and schools for the readmission of these children. First of all, the state does not have any registry showing where the children are at the moment. The schools, if familiar with the family's migration decision, do not notify the state authorities immediately about the absence of a child, because according to the law a primary school can operate only if there are at least two separate class groups for every grade, from the first until the ninth[10]. If the child is absent for more than a school term, then the school informs the responsible state authorities. Until then, they expect the family to return and the child to continue with his/her education. Even in such cases, the schools do not offer any help to the child to cope with the lost materials, so the education centers have to step in and prepare the children for the readmission process. The school has shown interest when it comes to bigger groups. Durmis gave me an example from the recent years, when many

[10] See *Law for Primary Education. Закон за основното образование*. Available at: http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2012/libraries/mk/Law%20on%20Primary%20Education.pdf

families from the neighborhood decided to migrate as asylum seekers across Europe and the school was almost empty in September (the beginning of the school year). Many of the families came back before the winter break, so the center proposed to prepare the children along with the school staff who will examine them and based on their results will grade them for the past term.

In cases where the families are absent for a longer time, there is resistance from all sides (the family, the child and the school) for readmitting the child in the formal education. They all might argue that it is not good for the child to study with students who are at a much younger age, but the center recognizes the need for education and persuades all the affected sides to enroll the child in the schools. The center provides all the necessary help for coping with school materials. Upon deportation, if the child is left on its own he/she will not continue with its education. The families are not able to help, the schools do not know how to deal with such cases, so the child will just get demotivated and accept that he/she is not good enough. When there is a helping hand, like the center, that is willing to work with them and encourages them to continue with formal education, the children start believing in their own capabilities. So far, the children of deportees that have passed through the center have not only finished primary, but also secondary school. "When Roma children will be offered quality education, that's when we will have integration"[11].

Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo have drafted state programs to help the reintegration of deported citizens[12]. All of them recognize the Roma deportees to be the most vulnerable in the reintegration process and have even recognized the most immediate issues of the deportees upon their return. However, while Serbia and Kosovo are implementing their

[11] Statement of Zaklina Durmis during the interview.
[12] See Human Rights Watch. 2010. *Right s Displaced: Forced returns of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians from Western Europe to Kosovo*. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/kosovo1010_brochure_low_0.pdf
See *Strategy for Reintegration of Returnees.* Available at*:* *http://www.kirs.gov.rs/articles/aboutus.php?lang=ENG*

proposed programs, there is no sign of implementation of the program in Macedonia. The non-governmental sector is providing help on local level, but they are not able to reach high success rates, as the state programs would.

Germany and all the other European countries provide the necessary services for the asylum seekers in their territory. But when these states make the decision of not granting asylum to immigrants in their country, the responsibilities towards the asylum seekers finish. The Macedonian state is obliged to pick up where the European states left off and with that take the responsibility for its citizens back. By deporting the individuals to their countries of citizenship, it is implied that the Macedonian Roma belong in the Macedonian state. This feeling might be reinforced if the state institutions would indeed receive these citizens in an organized manner and assist them in all the necessary reintegration processes.

The welcoming party of the deportees constitutes only of their relatives of friends who choose to offer help upon return. The deportees are supposed to feel at home in an environment that has not proven to be fruitful for advancement in any sphere of social life, they should integrate themselves in the existing social structures, while being othered by the rest of the Macedonian citizens

None of my informants received help from state institutions and upon deportation they were mostly relying on family and friends to start anew in the Macedonian society. One of my informants shared:

> It was so bad when we returned. We were staying with my husband's mother and my daughter who was four at the time was always asking me 'when are we going home?' and I was telling her that this is our home now. But she didn't want to accept that. She was insisting that this was not her home and she wants to go back to her friends… We did not want to go out. We were embarrassed. We felt like we had failed. They were asking us 'but why did you return? Wasn't there a way to stay?' Of course there wasn't. Mostly we liked spending our time with relatives who were in the same situation, who were also deported. They knew how it was… V's story – 1st wave migrant

Most of my informants shared this sentiment. Stress, mental illnesses, and economic deprivation are just a few of the issues that the deportees are facing. If the state intends to lower the number of emigrants as asylum seekers, these issues have to be addressed since they can be seen as push factors for re-emigration (Morris and Palazuelos 2015).

Conclusion

This thesis provided just a glimpse of the everyday lives of Macedonian Roma as migrants in European countries and deportees in Macedonia. History shows that the position of the Roma minority was slightly better in the Yugoslav state compared with other countries and political regimes (Crowe 1995). The idea of equality that was spread among Roma has shaped their expectations of the state provided securities. The fall of Yugoslavia was followed by a big wave of Roma migrants from the region, most of whom claimed asylum in Germany. The migration of Macedonian Roma to economically developed European countries is still present today. However, this paper argues that there is a difference in the migration experiences of Macedonian Roma depending on the period of migration.

The first wave migrants (1991-1995) had the status of Yugoslav refugees and as such, during their time abroad, had more chances of being transferred in an apartment, finding employment and had better relationship with the local population. My informants believe that this is due to their family networks (relatives who were already settled abroad) and Yugoslav citizenship which brought them a higher reputation.

I use the term 'wave' to refer to the second period of migration (1995 – 2009), although the number of migrants was not as high as in the years before. In this period, Macedonian citizens were required to obtain a visa in order to enter the European Union states. Visa was granted easier to people who had employment, however the rate of unemployment among Roma was (and still is) on a very high level. Those who managed to migrate were mostly satisfied with the state provided services and the communication with the locals (which was much more limited than in the first wave), but the employment opportunities were much worse (or non-existent) in this period of migration.

In the third wave of migration which started in 2009 and is still ongoing, the migrants are very disappointed from their asylum seeking experience. The racial profiling at the

Macedonian borders is just one of many obstacles that they face in the migration process. The German state provided services proved to be very bad for my informants and the relationship with the local population and authorities confirm the labeling practices present in Europe.

Many authors have examined the social implications that the act of deportation has on the affected individuals. In addition, they have analyzed deportees as expelled immigrants in one country and as returned citizens in their country of nationality (Gibney and Hansen 2003, Fekete 2005, Charles 2010, Peutz 2010). The act implies that the deportee's sense of belonging matches the citizenship of the individual (Anderson et al. 2013).

The reintegration process upon deportation has not been subject to change throughout the years. The Macedonian state practices prove that the state institutions are not prepared for receiving the deportees. Housing is not provided for the deported citizens, employment is nearly impossible to be found, but the education sphere has witnessed some changes regarding the deported children. While the first and second wave deportees were dependent on the help of other individuals (neighbors, school teachers), the third wave deportees (in specific cities and neighborhoods) have the opportunity to attend (non-governmental) education centers for Roma students who prepare them for the formal education.

As the migration experiences of Macedonian Roma migrants were changing, their understanding of 'home' also shifted. The state provided services in Yugoslavia did not leave much space for questioning the meaning of home, whereas the labeling practices present in all the spheres in everyday life in Macedonia has resulted in lowering the expectations of Roma in terms of security and hope for the future. Although being a Macedonian citizen implies equality and legal protection, lower quality of life, racial profiling at the Macedonian borders, lack of reintegration programs for deportees prove the exact opposite.

Drawing from my informants, I argue that Roma could identify much easier with Yugoslavia as their home, in terms of minority status (ethnic minority status granted in 1974),

relationship with the state as well as with majority and minority groups and legal status and liberties (like migration). These factors provided a sense of security which means that it was much easier for Roma to plan their future. The Macedonian practices however have confined the meaning of home for Roma to a much more limiting sphere. The 'home' that the state provides for its Roma citizens offers low quality education, limited employment opportunities, limited access to health services, poor housing conditions and offensive attitudes of the mainstream media. These feelings are reinforced for the Roma deportees since the state so far has not implemented any programs for helping them in the reintegration process. Also, the 2011 warning that Macedonia received from the European Union regarding the flow of asylum seekers, did not convince the state to explore the reasons for migration of Roma citizens and instead focused on implementing mechanisms on limiting the number of Roma who exit the country.

Regarding the power relations, from the narratives it can be concluded that Roma are confined and their experiences and expectations are shaped by the Macedonian structures. They prove that they have the capacity to act as agents but the structures do not allow Roma to acquire enough power to act. Although the mainstream media has focused most of its attention on Roma as welfare recipients and have specified their lack of interest in acquiring employment positions, my informants reveal that the main reason for migration is having better employment opportunities which will contribute to improving their status in society.

Roma are differentiated by the state, but by approaching them only as victims of structures, their capacity to act as agents is completely disregarded. The successful stories of previous migrants which proved to be decisive for my informants regarding their migration decision were mostly based on the relationship of the state towards its citizens and abundance of employment opportunities. Their expectations from the new environment show the need for changing their status in society. My informants understand how limiting the Macedonian

structures are towards them and they search for a stable environment in which they will be able to influence the societal structures and to exercise power as agents in society.

The processes of migration and deportation of Macedonian Roma need to be examined in terms of othering due to the marginalized status that is imposed to the Roma minority not only in Macedonia, but throughout Europe (Thornton 2015). Othering in this case is portrayed through differentiation practices based on ethnicity. Ethnic differentiation is highly encouraged in some, but should be limited in other cases. It can serve as a powerful tool for providing visibility to the issues that the Roma citizens of a certain country are facing. However, for minorities like Roma, ethnic differentiation can sometimes contribute to 'normalizing' the social difficulties that they face through prescribing them as ethnic characteristics. The latter has been mostly used in the media coverage of cases of deportation of Roma to Macedonia and the countries in region. As an example, I found five different Macedonian news portals that covered a story in 2010 about deportation of Macedonian citizens from Germany[13]. All of them were clarifying either in the title or the text that the majority of the deportees are Roma. However, there was no explanation of why these people had migrated in the first place or what their opportunities are back in Macedonia. In this case I find the use of ethnic differentiation to be unjustified.

This approach has been used in a number of documentaries for the Roma migrants in Western Europe where the focus of the stories is put on individuals who make a living out of begging, stealing or participating in criminal activities[14]. Although the main goal of the documentaries might not have been to prescribe labels to an entire ethnic group, that is the only thing that they have achieved to do. My critique might not have been justified if the documentaries were examining the factors that contributed to the development of such

[13] See http://daily.mk/vesti/makedonija-38-lugje-glavno-romi-deportirani-so-charter-let-od
[14] See *Gypsy Child Thieves* (BBC Documentary). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THInODdvvMQ and *Gypsy beggar gangs in Sweden* (documentary by Miroluba Benatova). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5-nX_gYHPM

"delinquent" behavior in the portrayed individuals. The stories that the non-Roma have heard about Roma as asylum seekers may influence the reintegration process of the deportees.

Ethnic differentiation is encouraged to be used by the Macedonian state for drafting state policies, governmental and non-governmental programs as well as academic research whose goal is to conceptualize the challenges that the deportees face upon return in their home country. Academic literature on the topic is very thin and the only materials that can be found online are reports by individuals or organizations who have struggled to make sense of the available quantitative data (Bornarova 2011, Durmis and Mitanovski 2016).

Belonging for Macedonian Roma is a fluid construct which, as I argue, is a result of the intersection of the concepts of 'home', 'other' and 'power'. First, the sense of 'belonging' has been present among Macedonian Roma when their home environment was promoting their security in terms of social wellbeing and social cohesion. This means that they (mostly) had access to the employment opportunities and state benefits available for the rest of the population. Second, when othering, or using ethnic differentiation to support the reproduction of labels was practiced on a lower level due to the everyday contact with non-Roma (at work, in schools). In other words, 'belonging' can be experienced when non-Roma do not have the opportunity to reproduce the labels about Roma due to the fact that their stereotypes can be easily shattered when working or studying with Roma people. And third, Macedonian Roma felt that they 'belong' when they could shape the societal structures in their favor. They were acting as agents through their employment and education opportunities where they were shaping the opinions of others.

Anthias states "People belong together when they share values, relations and practices" (2006:21). To broaden this statement, I argue that Macedonian Roma can belong and feel at home when they will acquire the power that will allow them to participate in structuring the values, relations and practices that are shared with the others. Yugoslavia

partially fulfilled all of the criteria which provided Macedonian Roma a stronger sense of belonging, however this sense has been lowered in the Macedonian context. Belonging, according to Pfaff-Czarnecka, combines the maintenance of social ties with the reinforcement of commitments and obligations (2011). If Macedonian Roma continue to be excluded from the reinforcement processes and are instead just obliged to follow the structures, they will not be able to feel that they 'belong' in the Macedonian society. The shifts in the 'sense of belonging' result, as May states, from social changes, because experiences are "dynamic and sensitive to changes" (2011: 368). Macedonian Roma have a lower sense of belonging when comparing with the Yugoslav context because it is the most recent social change that has affected their group status.

One of the issues that can be raised, but was not analyzed in this thesis is the gender perspective in the migration and deportation processes in terms of belonging. Although my informants consisted of an equal number of men and women, I did not provide a gender based analyses, as I believe that the topic requires the same amount of elaboration that has been provided throughout the paper. The second issue that I raise for further research is the perception of Roma as cheap labor force in the "black market". Although, my informants shared their experiences as workers in the receiving states, I did not explore in depth whether the employers were abusing Roma as cheap labor force or they were providing decent employment opportunities for Roma migrants. The issues were not analyzed in this paper since I consider their analysis to require a different conceptual framework.

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