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# The Meanings of “Home” and “Homeland” in Slovene Diasporic Communities

*Tea Golob*

The article addresses Slovene transnational migrants from Argentina and from some parts of Europe (especially Germany and France) that once emigrated from Slovenia and have now returned, or were born in Slovene communities abroad and have recently come to live in Slovenia. The focus is on certain practices and narratives of Slovene diasporic communities, which seemed to play an important role in migrants' identification with their Slovene “roots”, and thus considerably influenced their imaginations of home and homeland. It is argued that migrants' attempts to preserve and transmit ideas of *homeland* actually contribute to the ideas about *home*. Therefore, Slovenia becomes a substitute for a *home*.

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The underlying thought of the article is that *home* occupies an important position in contemporary anthropological literature on transnationality, hybridity and creolisation. By deploying the notion of *home* as an analytical tool, I attempt to elucidate the complexity of migration processes of the particular migrant groups which have been a part of my anthropological concerns since 2007. Therefore, the focus is on Slovene migrants from Argentina and from some parts of Europe, especially Germany and France, that once emigrated from Slovenia and have now returned as well as those that were born in Slovene communities abroad and have recently come to live in Slovenia.

Ethnographic research serves as a frame of the paper; research that I carried out in Slovenia in November 2007 and March 2008, as part of my postgraduate programme. At the very beginning of my research I realised that migration experiences of my informants were far from being simple. They participate in complex social relations and connections within communities that seemingly exceed distinct boundaries, and, in doing so, they also create these relations. Their activities are conditioned by a regular movement across national borders, and have a great effect on their personal and collective identifications. The

expression of one of my informants, born to the second generation of the Slovenes living in Argentina, may illustrate the situation of which they are a part:

When I was young and I lived in Argentina, we talked a lot about Slovenia. Sometimes we got a letter from an aunt, and this represented the only contact with Slovenia. Now it is completely different. I'm living in Slovenia now, but I'm having regular contacts with friends and relatives in Argentina. Sometimes I go there to visit them. Even more often I receive visits from there. In addition, we maintain regular contact over the Internet. I think we are very close to each other, despite a large distance.

It has become inevitable that the rapid and sustained economic growth, increasing internationalisation of economic activity, decolonisation, and globalisation processes characterise the contemporary migration processes (July 2004). As opposed to more traditional approaches to migration (Klinar 1976), contemporary international migration is no longer simply a case of place of origin and place of arrival as it was traditionally assumed. Theories considering migration as a rather directed movement with a point of departure and a point of arrival have turned out to be insufficient. In the world where migration has become a constitutive component of globalisation processes, connecting different regions through trade and labour exchange, international flows, and rapidly advancing transportation and communication technology (Bommes and Morawska 2005), the notion of transnationalism, referring to various kinds of global or cross-border connections, has framed the phenomenon. Accordingly, the examined migrants could be defined as members of the Slovene transnational diaspora, which is not considered as a group of people living outside of their national country, but as the contemporary phenomenon composed in the spaces of globalisation, transnational culture flows and mass migration (see Skrbiš 2003: 10). Transnational networks, activities and connections are tied up with their everyday reality. They make decisions that affect their daily life across national borders, and, accordingly, knit ongoing relationships between household members living in both locations.

Focusing on migrants discussed here, one can notice, that before they decided to come (back) to Slovenia, they had organized, not just nostalgic imagining of the homeland, but also active relationship with it, on a daily level. They became firmly rooted in their new country, but they maintained multiple linkages with the other. Migrants paid regular visits to their homeland and maintained contacts with their relatives and friends living in Slovenia. Furthermore, a constant exchange of resources characterised even more organised activities. Beside important personal and informal connections, transnational flows took place through institutional channels, associations and organised festivities (see Golob 2009).

Regular connections between immigrant communities and homeland were established almost immediately after the arrival of immigrants and were relatively strong. Nevertheless, during the time when Slovenia was about to become independent, those links significantly strengthened. Furthermore, the discourse of Slovene diaspora came to the fore in that time and it entered the political field as a political discourse and construct as a result of the active participation of Slovene migrants in the process of independence (Skrbiš 2003: 13). It is argued that by accessing to new channels of communication, by economic exchange or physical mobility, extraterritorial groups or organisations seek political influence in their homelands or in other communities of the same perceived origin, or vice versa (Kokot et al. 2004: 1–2). However, the political activity of Slovene migrant communities is a complex phenomenon, seeing that particular political institutions and parties in Slovenia have played an important role in its political mobilisation. Slovene diaspora as a term and as a phenomenon entered the field of political discourse during the process of Slovene independence, in order to serve as a support to certain ideological and political perspectives. Afterwards, Slovene migrant communities have moved from an inert political position to an influential engagement in politics. Similar processes took place in many other post-socialist countries where diaspora started to support the process of democratisation and independence in their homeland. In Slovenia, particularly, the mobilisation of diaspora actuated hidden topics and put them in front of national dilemmas articulated in media and political discourses. The presence of diaspora in political discussions gave rise to new perspectives on Slovenianess, while establishing more global ideas about the Slovene nation and enabling the discourse of Slovene global diaspora (see Skrbiš 2003: 14–15).

The challenge of the study was, therefore, to capture narrations of migrants who are cognitively and physically attached to their social worlds stretched between two or more nations. Their connections are shaped within transnational social spaces that link together different localities dispersed on various world regions. In order to understand the complexity of Slovene transnational migration, and to elucidate the impact that connections between diasporic communities and homeland have on migrants' life, my goal was to collect their stories about *home*. Regarding recent shifts in anthropological perspectives, which have moved the focus from ideas that locality and community are simply given or natural to processes of place-making (e.g., Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Gupta and Ferguson 2007), the concept of home nowadays presents an intricate concept embracing social praxis, norms and values, feelings of belongings and attachments. I leaned on the presumption that transnational migration does not only introduce a disjuncture between people and their homeland but also between their homeland and their homes. Migrants may therefore create more

than one home not necessarily attached to a homeland (see Tsuda 2004: 125). Nevertheless, I argue that their perception of home is considerably influenced by their living in diasporic communities. Furthermore, diasporic communities seem to play an important role in migrants' identification with their Slovene "roots" and with their perceptions of "home", and often greatly affect someone's decision to return to Slovenia. Accordingly, I intend to represent various ways in which migrants constructed home while living abroad, while arguing that their perception of a certain place is a product of imagination which presents a basis for attaching the meaning to the world around them (see Appadurai 1996: 4). My goal is to illustrate the ideas of *home* through their manifestation in physical objects, social and cultural practices, and thus to approach to migrants' perception of *home* via their relation to ethnic origin, homeland and their activities to sustain their culture, heritage, language, and national consciousness while living abroad.

### **Notions of "Home" and "Homeland" within Frames of Transnational Migration**

"Home" has always been a concern of scholars exploring various issues relating to the ideas of intimacy, family, kinship, gender, ethnicity, relations of production and consumption and many more. Regarding the fact that the notion of home comprises various aspects of people's life, it is not surprising how many different ways of exploring home have emerged in disciplines concerning people, societies and places. Accordingly, various meanings have been associated with the notion of home, such as a house, a haven, a family, a homeland and journeying. Studies of the meaning and experience of home have especially proliferated over the past two decades, particularly within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, human geography, and history. By reviewing the literature on the topic, one can notice that the contemporary Anglo-European, Anglo-American or more broadly white Western conceptions of home give priority to a physical structure or dwelling such as a house, flat, institution or caravan (see Mallet 2004: 65). It has been argued that more traditional anthropological conceptualisations considered the notion of home mostly as a synonym of a house or household (see Rapport and Overing 2003: 157). Accordingly, home referred to a physical shelter, territorially bounded in a certain location where daily routines and family relations were embedded in a fixed environment. Home was thus conceptualised as a stable physical centre of one's universe, as a safe place to leave and return to, whether a house, a village, a region or a nation, and a principal focus of one's concern and control. Home presented a place where space and time were controlled and "structured



functionally, economically, aesthetically and morally" and where domestic "communitarian practices" could be realised (Rapport and Dawson 1998: 3). Homes also gave structure to time and embodied a capacity of memory and anticipation. In short, homes could be understood as allocation of resources and organisation of space over time. Accordingly, homes presented communities in microcosm which coordinated their members by way of open and constant communication, a division of labour, rights and duties, and rotation of access to resources (see Rapport and Dawson 1998: 3).

Considering home as a physical place, another issue comes up, although on a different scale, referring to a country, nation-state or homeland (Ahmed 1999; Armbruster 2002). Such a conceptualisation of home is explicitly territorially based and predicated upon the nation-state acting as "the primary container for people's lives" (Lucas and Purkayastha 2007: 244). It has been argued that *home* defined as a country therefore assumes a conflation and territorialisation of citizenship, community, identity and belonging (Basch et al. 1994). The relation between home and homestead or homeland deserves a further exploration seeing that the correlation between home and homeland changed a couple of centuries ago coinciding with the rise of nationalist movements. Many researchers have examined the etymology of the word as part of a broader agenda to examine the historical antecedents of the term. In the Slovene language, the notion of home – *dom* – embraces the variety of meanings. According to the Dictionary of the Slovene Standard Language (SSKJ 1991), it can denote a place of living, a family formation, a homestead, or particular institutions. Furthermore, it can also be used as an expressive metaphor for a homeland – *domovina*. In the languages of southern Slavs there is the distinction between homestead or home-place and homeland even more strongly expressed, when the term "zavičaj" is used. The term is almost impossible to translate, nevertheless, there is an interesting discussion on that issue trying to define the difference by analysing the relation between "Heimat" and "Väterland" (see Bausinger 1990).

Reviewing Slovene literature on home, there is a dearth of theoretical works on the topic, yet the *home* is often associated with a birthplace and a homeland, especially in literary works which have often been a result of political aspirations. Starting with one of the greatest Slovene writers Ivan Cankar, who lived and created in the nineteenth century, and continuing to the later era of communism, one can notice that many songs, novels and poems were dedicated to this special relation between home and homeland. Seeing this as being far from just a Slovene characteristic, many researchers have claimed that home is actually an ideological construct (Sommerville 1992; Jackson 1995; Gurney 1997; see Mallet 2004: 81). In this light, home emerges through, and is created

from people's lived experience, where emotions play an important role in the discursive construction of the meaning of home (Mallet 2004: 81). Furthermore, a sense of belonging to a specific place often accompanies a wish to reproduce and/or reinvent traditions and cultures associated with home. "It is not only national, cultural and social belongings, but also a sense of the self, of one's identity, which corresponds to various conceptualisations of home" (Al-Ali and Koser 2002: 7). Its relation to the outside has often defined home, just as conceptualisations of belonging and identity. Fear, danger, the unknown, foreign and alien places and traditions, unfamiliar faces and habits are all part of what is not home (Al-Ali and Koser 2002: 7).

In contemporary anthropological perspectives home can still refer to a house or a nation-state. Nevertheless, views on the notion have changed. The growth of global communications, media, consumerism and popular culture has greatly affected the contemporary world situation. New issues have emerged and a new conceptual lens has been used to approach to the concept of *home*. Reevaluated ideas about home reflect the changing relation between individuals and perceptions of place. Jaka Repič argues that, since places are more a result of imagination than being just a static entity, the symbolic geography and meanings attached to them can be as real as the actual territory. Although the imagined places are experienced only through social memories, they can be as real as actual, experienced places (Repič 2008: 183). Taking the changing perspectives into account, one can see the perception of place as most intriguing, especially while considering it through the lens of contemporary migrants. It has been argued that traditional understandings of home as fixed and territorially-based entities are anachronistic, and provide little conceptual purchase in the world of contemporary movement. New ideas about home have been postulated indicating perspectives which are concerned less with the routinisation of space and time and more with their fluidity and with individuals' continuous movement through them (Rapport and Dawson 1998; Rapport and Overing 2003; Ahmed 1999; Mallet 2004; Lucas and Purkayastha 2007). Accordingly, a concept of home should consider "various modalities, as for instance memory and longing; the conventional and the creative; the ideational, the affective and the physical; the spatial and the temporal; the local and the global; both positive evaluations and negative" (Rapport and Overing 2003: 157).

Globalisation, transnational processes and creation of transnational social spaces have greatly affected the meaning of home for migrants. Accordingly, the perception of home means paying attention to the interplay between mobility and fixity, between change and continuity, and between deterritorialisation and (re)territorialisation (Stefansson 2004). During my research, I encountered that homes in migrants' stories are negotiated between embodied experiences,

social networks, and politicised and narrated identities, while both Slovenia and immigrants' countries were associated with feelings of home (see Golob 2009: 74–75). Therefore, migrants construct home and define themselves in relation between Slovenia and Argentina or Germany and France. While living abroad, migrants maintained contacts across national borders. Nevertheless, this did not necessarily mean that their national affiliations and identities were similarly fluid and malleable. In many cases, there was a continued identification with the nation-state of their origin, often because of the intention to return. Accordingly, the aim herein is to explore the ways in which the idea of the homeland is manifested and sustained in communities, yet the focus is on the relation between home and homeland. I assume that migrants' attempts to preserve and transmit ideas of *homeland* actually contribute to the ideas about *home*. Therefore, Slovenia becomes a substitute for a *home*.

### **The Meanings of "Home" and Homeland in Slovene Diasporic Communities**

The Slovenes have cultivated special feelings about their homeland in diasporic communities since the very beginning of immigration processes. Migration patterns from the contemporary Slovene territory emerged in different periods due to various economic and political forces. The historical context of migration processes and cultural policy of immigration countries have significantly denoted Slovene migrants, their activities, societies and associations. Furthermore, the historical background and political and social context influencing emigration still hold a great impact on contemporary migration issues concerning the Slovenes all over the world.

Emigration flows reached the first peak in the nineteenth century. Population growth and emergence of capitalist restructuring of production forced many people into urban centres where social conditions were hard. Lack of money and low standard of living in the new environment lured many to search for a better life in overseas destinations (Bajt 2003: 125).

Large-scale migration re-emerged almost immediately after the First World War. Once the USA limited migrations to its territory, people started to emigrate to Canada, South American countries and Australia (Štumberger 2005: 101). During the economic crises of the twenties and thirties, Slovenes were looking for occupation in the mining industry in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands (Valenčič 1990: 62–64). Beside the economic factors influencing emigration, the political conditions were also of great importance. After the First World War, the Slovene region Primorska was annexed to Italian territory and the majority of local inhabitants were forced to leave their homes because

of pressures of fascism and irredentist movements (Umek 1966). They mostly migrated to other parts of the Kingdom of SHS<sup>1</sup>, nevertheless, many of them left for South America, especially for Argentina and Brazil (Čebulj-Sajko 1999).

After the Second World War, another large wave of emigration occurred. It is quite difficult to estimate how many Slovenes emigrated to certain countries after the war had ended, since most of the official statistics merely noted the numbers of Yugoslavs, not distinguishing among their place of origin<sup>2</sup>. It seems that the majority of Slovenes emigrated to Argentina and other South American countries, followed by the US, Canada and Australia, as well as several West-European countries (Bajt 2003: 126).

The majority of the post-war emigrants were political opponents to the newly emerged communist regime. The establishment of the new Yugoslav Republic gave rise to the communist party, which many people considered a threat to the new state formation. People with different ideological perspectives were forced to emigrate and more than a half of them emigrated to South America, especially to Argentina (Čebulj-Sajko 1992). The majority of them were treated as Nazi-collaborators and they had illegally emigrated before the war actually ended. Political refugees settled all around the globe, especially in Argentina, Australia, Canada and the USA.

Nevertheless, it was not only political migrants who migrated illegally. Till the beginning of the sixties, the emigration continued to be illegal, regardless of politics or economy. After the year 1964, Yugoslavia opened its borders and organised a so-called temporary working emigration. The need in the labour force increased, and, consequently, emigration was encouraged in order to revive the destroyed economies in European countries, particularly in the Western part of Europe. In the years 1965–1975, Yugoslavia signed international agreements with many European countries, such as France, Austria, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Austria, assuring employment and social security for their emigrants (Lukšič-Hacin 2002).

Accordingly, there are some crucial distinctions between Slovene diasporic communities in Argentina and the ones in European countries, referring especially to the situation that signified emigration from the Slovene territory. Besides economic factors that remarkably influenced Slovene migration in the previous century, many Slovenes emigrated due to political reasons which forced

<sup>1</sup> A Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

<sup>2</sup> Slovene lands were part of Austria-Hungary Empire (1867–1918). Following the 1st World War (1914–1918), they joined other South Slavs in the State of Slovenes, Croates and Serbs, followed by Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and finally kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1945, Slovenia joined the federation as a socialist federation of Yugoslavia. In 1991, Slovenia became an independent nation state.

them to leave their homes. Although both factors often overlapped, they crucially influenced migration flows to a particular country and, consequently, had also a strong influence also on the descendants of Slovene migrants. Focusing on migration to Argentina, one can notice that the political component played a vital role. Furthermore, the last time Slovenes emigrated to Argentina was due to political reasons after the Second World War. Accordingly, being a part of a special social, ethnic-linguistic and cultural group, they had a strong interest in establishing and maintaining relations with its original nation. Due to the political situation, they established Slovene communities where they often made conscious efforts to preserve Slovene identity, cultural heritage and memories of the homeland, and tried to transfer the accumulation of those efforts onto their descendants.

The political context of migration to European countries is certainly not negligible, although the economic factors seem to be prevailing, especially while considering migration to Germany. Due to the economic situation in former Yugoslavia and in accordance with accelerated accumulation of capital in Western Europe, after the Second World War, the Slovenes still massively emigrated to Germany and France till the 1970s to search for work. Nevertheless, similar to the situation in Argentina, the most active members and organisers of social life were the Slovene priests who made a great effort to preserve the Slovene identity. Aside from masses performed in the Slovene language, they conducted informal lessons in Slovene in all settlements with more concentrated Slovene population (Bogovič and Cajnko 1983: 42–43). Their activities helped to maintain relatively regular and strong connections with the homeland and among the migrants (Bernard 1997: 321). Regular activities of Catholic priests dedicated to their national affiliation took place in Catholic missions and rectories, which were often connected with other associations placed in Europe.

Despite many differences among diasporic communities, home represents a component of Slovene identity to Slovene immigrants in Argentina, similar to Germany and France. They have preserved memories on their homeland and the Slovene roots with specific external and internal image and social practice in domestic environments and other places. The latter has marked them as being different and put them in opposition to the "others". This has determined their self-definition. In Europe, the component of external image of their homes is less exposed, also because of a similar cultural environment. It needs to be explained that production and use of homes entail the reciprocal influence of the domestic environment on actors who find their daily activities both enabled and constrained by the physical character of the house and its contents. Home is, according to Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuñiga, encoded with complex symbolic meanings, expressing identity, status and good life, which, coupled,

represent, influence and teach (Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zuñiga 1999: 9). The idea of home that reflects their relation to a homeland was manifested in their domestic environments.

Usually, the walls of the homes were decorated with calendars showing the Slovene landscape, with pictures presenting Slovene churches, villages and with motives referring to everyday life in Slovenia. According to Walsh, especially in homes of expatriates, landscapes could have an important function as mnemonics, anchoring belonging explicitly in geographical space. These pictures could present a home as a nation, a romanticised celebration of connection with homeland. The decoration thus refers to a powerful marker of belonging. Yet the image is actually a domestic scene, a lived intimate landscape, and has been displayed on the wall for its personalised meaning (Walsh 2006: 131).

Therefore, *home* can be a physical place with certain decoration that refers to Slovenianess. Nevertheless, instead of the external image, social practices inside *home* are much more important in establishing the home sphere. Homemaking presents a complex struggle in which *home* can be made of the home out of an arena of warring cultural practices with an appointed language, politics, accent and sexual behaviour. The domestic threshold of immigrants can also mark a boundary of difference inside which identity and cultural practices referred to the country of origin may be maintained (see Buckley 1997).

Slovene migrants produce *home* with different social practices and certain products considered as Slovene. For instance, some expressions of migrants talking about their homes abroad are examples of how an external image and social practice inside their homes influence someone's identification:

I have always felt that our home was different. You could see a distinction between Slovene and Argentine homes. They used a lot of stone while building houses, but Slovenians did not. We made almost everything from wood, walls had wood panelling, but Argentine walls were plain (An interview with a migrant from Argentina born to the second generation of the Slovenes living there).

Our home in Argentina totally looks like homes in Slovenia. The visual image of Slovenes' homes in Argentina resembles a traditional Slovene restaurant (An interview with a migrant from Argentina, born to the third generation of the Slovenes living there).

My father decorated our balcony in a Slovene way, with little red hearts. I noticed that when I came to Slovenia. But in Argentina I knew it was different from the others, really original (An interview with a migrant from Argentina, born to the third generation of the Slovenes living there).

An important issue in homemaking also is the transmittance of Slovene identity to children. A home, as a domestic environment, plays a crucial role in that process, while serving as a base for referencing Slovenianess. It is a

place where, through primal socialization, individuals receive information that orientates their self-identification. Therefore, social and cultural practices inside their homes have emphasised Slovene identity. For instance, informants from the second or the third generation of immigrants living in Europe and in Argentina remembered:

I think our home in Argentina was Slovene, of course, everybody spoke the Slovene language indoors. For every holiday, we had *potica*<sup>3</sup> and *koline*<sup>4</sup> on the table as well (An interview with a migrant from Argentina, born to a third generation of the Slovenes living there).

We had a rule, unwritten, of course: at home, the Slovene language must be strictly spoken, while outdoors we could talk French (An interview with a migrant from France, born to a second generation of the Slovenes living there).

I remember that every Sunday we ate lunch which we considered as typical Slovene and we listened to Slovene music... We also had a lot of Slovene books and my mother often read Slovene fairytales to me when I was young (An interview with a migrant from Argentina, born to a third generation of the Slovenes living there).

Slovenes regularly listened to Slovene music and possessed a lot of music records with popular Slovene music. Besides, they have watched Slovene television programmes through satellite channels. It was important, therefore, for their self-identification as well as for the maintenance of their group, to be able to watch programmes from their own culture. Family, as a primary site of socialization, has a key role in confirming collective memories, preserving Slovene identity and thus constructing the perception of the homeland. Migrants that were born abroad generally volunteered memories of childhood and family as a precursor to talk about Slovene habits and to learning the Slovene language. The situation in immigrant communities in Argentina was different from that in Europe because many Slovene children spoke only the Slovene language before they went to school. Consequently, they felt themselves to be total strangers among their schoolmates. Longing for better incorporation into the environment, they tried to learn a new language fast. Some of the migrants depicted that situation as a very stressful one. Moreover, many of them have never felt very comfortable in Argentine social environment. As one migrant, born to the second generation of the Slovenes living there, said:

<sup>3</sup> Potica is a traditional Slovene pastry.

<sup>4</sup> Koline is a pig-slaughter activity to obtain pork; final products, such as sausages, are designated by the same expression.

I always felt like a stranger in Argentina. After I grew up, it became a little bit easier for me. However, I still remember how they made fun of me in school because of my Slovene name and of my appearance.

In Europe, Slovene communities are much smaller and far less connected than in Argentina. Consequently, children are more exposed to “foreign” influences and are able to integrate more easily into a society abroad. Some children also feel resistance to all that is Slovene. A migrant that lived in Germany remembered the case of her daughter, which she found as very painful:

We signed our daughter to a German kindergarten to learn German, but after that, she did not want to say even a word in Slovene. I was very sad, but I could say anything. I was talking to her in the Slovene language, but she responded to me in German. When we came back to Slovenia for the first time just on a holiday, we sat in a bar and she ordered a juice in the Slovene language. I cried because of happiness.

Institutions such as kindergartens or schools also have an important role in processes of socialization, in terms of transferring Slovene identity. Being aware of the crucial meaning of education, immigrants organise regular lessons in the Slovene language. The basis for education was mainly established by Catholic priests. Lessons are usually limited to primary education. Nevertheless, the Slovene community in Buenos Aires has also organised high-school lectures since 1961. Slovene students who graduated from those schools first used to visit the place called Bariloche, which resembles mountainous Slovenia. Since 1991, the time of the Slovene independence, visits to Slovenia have become a replacement; they prepare all four years of education for them. The interest in enrolling migrants’ children in Slovene courses has actually increased since 1991 as well. It has been argued that the process should be considered through the lens of transnational connections that have accelerated in the past decades and have emphasised the importance of the Slovene roots (Repič 2006: 154). The role of schools in that process is quite evident while comparing the situation in Argentina with the one of Europe; the integration of children living in Europe is more complete. Children in Argentina have strong friendship relations with schoolmates in Slovene schools, a result of strongly connected Slovene neighbourhoods and regular lessons. In contrast to the situation in Argentina, children in France and Germany mostly meet each other twice a week, during the mass or during Slovene lessons, and they do not socialise with each other otherwise because they usually live at a distance from one another. Aside from this, many do not take up Slovene courses at all. One of the migrants from France explained:



Our meetings were possible only every fourteen days before the Sunday mass. People were coming from very distant locations, at least 20 km from Paris. When they immigrated to Paris, they must have moved to small rooms and when they earned some money they tried to buy something on their own. So they settled outside the city because of lower prices of real estate there.

The other migrant coming from Germany shared a similar experience:

My husband was taking children to Slovene courses every week and he had to drive the distance of 30 km from our home...I think that the situation has become even worse since we left Germany; one teacher is now responsible for children living in the territory of 250 km.

Consequently, the process of assimilation is more successful. For instance, Slovene ethnic identifications among the third generation of migrants living in Europe are almost unrecognisable. One of the migrants coming from Germany revealed his sadness:

My grandchildren are not Slovenes anymore although they have been coming here on holidays. Their language is German and all their knowledge of the Slovene language is limited only to a few Slovene songs. We, the first generation, dream and think in Slovene, my grandchildren do not. I am glad that they are at least paying certain interest to our country, Slovenia.

In the process of assimilation the idea of home as a substitute for Slovenia gradually disappears in one's imagination of the self. Considering migrants' narratives, it becomes evident that the process of home-making reveals a certain connection between imaging a place and defining the self, and thus offers an invaluable insight into an individual's identification. With the practices of home-making, the relation between home and homeland appears to be an important characteristic of migrant communities. The idea of home as a country is manifested in a domestic environment encoded with complex symbolic meanings. Furthermore, the relation between home and homeland is developed and sustained also in different environments where Slovenianess is produced, and is manifested in physical objects and social and cultural practices. Furthermore, I assume that while they were trying to preserve Slovene identity and memories, they were actually "making home as a country".

One needs to understand that migration is not only felt at the level of embodiment. Migration is also seen as a matter of generational acts of storytelling, about prior histories of movement and dislocation. Migration involves complex acts of narration through which families imagine a mythic past which is quite noticeable in the case of political migrants both in Argentina and Europe. The stories of dislocation help to relocate: "They give shape, a contour, a skin to the past itself" (Ahmed 1999: 343). According to Sara Ahmed, the past becomes presentable through a history of lost homes, as a history which

hesitates between the particular and the general, and between the local and the transnational (Ahmed 1999: 343). In such a narrative journey, the space which is the closest to home is most comfortable and familiar, but it is not necessarily the space of inhabitancy; as in the cases of some of my informants, it presents more the idea what the home should be like. Accordingly, homes are also created and sustained by such narratives as: “this is where I come from, or my people come from” (Ahmed 1999: 346).

Therefore, homemaking could take place in different environments where Slovenianess is produced. Immigrants living in Slovene communities have been preserving Slovene identity, cultural heritage and memories on homeland, and have tried to pass that down to their descendants. Immigrants have maintained collective memories in schools, festivities and with other activities. They have organised various cultural events, published books and newspapers in the Slovene language and maintained the use of language by talking in Slovene among themselves and retaining memories of Slovenia. As one of the migrants coming from France remembered:

Slovene community in Paris has a long tradition. At the beginning, people gathered in different locations at various festivities. They had to rent a hall because they did not have their own premises. They had to bring all the food and drinks from their homes, but they were happy to see each other. Every afternoon, after the mass, we had many cultural activities and we enjoyed them very much. For the festivities, children were preparing performances, for example on St. Nicholas Eve or on Christmas.

One of the informants, coming from the third generation of immigrants living in Argentina, described the activities, events and practices of the Slovene community that illustrate the process of homemaking in terms of creating narratives and feelings of belongings:

We originated from a small part of Buenos Aires, which is an enormous city. Maybe when they<sup>5</sup> moved there it was actually a Slovene village but now it is more a Slovene island within a city jungle. It's an area where Slovene people live predominantly... there is a Slovene Home, the parish, home for the elderly, school and few workshops. Every Sunday there is a Slovene mass, Slovene choir, and other things. Every Saturday we have lessons in the Slovene language, we learn about Slovene history, geography and Slovene tradition. We put an emphasis on Catholic tradition. Anyway, at home we have Slovene habits, especially for holidays, we prepare *potica* and pies, we colour eggs for Easter. In the evenings we read the book of Martin Krpan<sup>6</sup> and sing Slovene songs.

<sup>5</sup> The generation of his grandparents.

<sup>6</sup> Slovene mythological hero.

## Conclusion

Examining Slovene communities, much can be revealed in terms of understanding many issues relating to migration. It is argued that migrant communities form a mirror – though often a distorted one – of the homeland; and the organisation of such communities reveals much about the position of their members in an immigrant society. Accordingly, members of a group find their identities as individuals through their occupancy of the community's social space and, thus, community is a referent of their identity (see Cohen 1985: 103–118).

The majority of migrants from both Europe and Argentina expressed that they felt special because of their Slovene origin while they lived abroad. They perceived their being different from others as a sort of privilege, and, consequently, they cultivated the feeling of exclusivity. For instance, one of the migrants from the second generation of the Slovenes living in Argentina expressed:

We were aware of our Slovene roots and we always had a feeling that we have the advantage over the locals because we had two cultures; we were familiar with Argentinean culture as everybody else and, beside that, we were familiar with Slovene culture.

A migrant, of the second generation of immigrants living in Germany said: "Every summer, we went on holidays to Slovenia and I had always felt special because of that. Not just anybody had relatives in a different country and, in addition, so beautiful".

Slovene immigrants passed down a very special image about Slovenia to their descendants. They put a great effort into sustaining and transmitting certain ideas, images and social memories about the homeland among their members in order to preserve Slovene identity. Symbolic resources in migrant communities enabled and sustained their identification as Slovene, while in relation with transnational activities, they simultaneously influenced ambivalent and multi-layered transnational attachments. I argue that transnational connections and practices evoked a certain identification which is based on the influence of their homeland and communities. However, it is shaped in transnational social space. Namely, informants often expressed their feeling of being more Slovene while living abroad compared to people who have never migrated and still live in their homeland. For instance, they cultivated more intensively the feeling of Slovenianess. They intentionally listened to Slovene music, prepared "their" food and "created" their homes with certain objects and practices in order to preserve their national identity. Nevertheless, when they came back or just moved to Slovenia their feelings of belongings changed. A Slovene migrant from Argentina gave an interesting expression, which alludes to fluid and flexible

identities. Keeping in mind that he was born in a diasporic community, his experiences are even more complex:

Before I first came to Slovenia, I could not really imagine how it is there. I mean, I only had my own ideas about the country. The people who actually lived there once had a major impact on me. One day a priest came from Slovenia, and I decided to join the group, which travelled there. In this group, I felt as a true Slovene. When we arrived to Slovenia, at least for the first days, I did not feel like a Slovene at all. I was Argentinean. Everything was so orderly, all people drive by the rules here [Laugh].

However, many of the migrants expressed that a part of them stayed there. They are emotionally and physically attached to the previous place of living, which is quite evident in their everyday practices and narratives. Slovene diasporic communities somehow represent social spaces where immigrants define and construct their collective identities in terms of emphasising their "roots". Focusing on migrants' narratives, one can notice, that the link between Slovenia and home is more than obvious. While they were living in diasporic communities, they were referencing Slovenia as a synonym for home. Accordingly, they were trying to construct their home abroad in the ways that would actually draw Slovenia as a country near to them. With different practices within their domestic environment, and within other places where they were constructing and imagining Slovenia (and Slovenianess), they were actually producing their *home*.

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## *Namų ir tėvynės įprasminimas slovėnų diasporos bendruomenėse*

*Tea Golob*

### *Santrauka*

Straipsnis skirtas slovėnų transnacionaliniams migrantams iš Argentinos ir kai kurių Europos kraštų, ypač Vokietijos ir Prancūzijos. Jie kadaise emigravo iš Slovėnijos ir dabar sugrįžo atgal arba gimė slovėnų bendruomenėse užsienyje ir neseniai grįžo gyventi į Slovėniją. Čia aptariami migrantai galėtų būti apibūdinti kaip slovėnų transnacionalinės diasporos nariai. Šia diaspora laikoma ne už nacionalinės šalies ribų gyvenanti gyventojų grupė, bet globalizacijos, transnacionalinės kultūros srautų bei masinės migracijos erdvėse susidaręs šiuolaikinis reiškinys (žr. Skrbiš 2003: 10). Transnacionaliniai tinklai, veikla ir ryšiai yra būdingi jų kasdieniui realybei. Migrantai priima sprendimus, kurie veikia jų kasdienį gyvenimą, nepaisydami nacionalinių sienų, ir todėl sutvirtina abiejose pusėse gyvenančių šeimos narių tarpusavio santykius.

Straipsnio dėmesio centre yra tam tikri slovėnų diasporos bendruomenių praktinė veikla ir naratyvai, kurie, atrodo, turėjo didelę įtaką migrantams tapatinantis su slovėniškosiomis „šaknimis“. Nuo pat imigracijos pradžios slovėnai diasporos bendruomenėse ugdė ypatingus jausmus savo tėvynei. Teigta, jog

*namų* suvokimui didelę įtaką padarė jų gyvenimas diasporos bendruomenėse. Slovėnų imigrantams Argentinoje, panašiai kaip ir Vokietijoje bei Prancūzijoje, *namai* yra slovėnų tapatumo sudedamoji dalis. Jie išlaikė atmintis apie savo tėvynę ir slovėnišką šaknis – turimus konkrečius namų aplinkos ir kitų vietų išorės bei vidaus vaizdinius ir socialinį veikimą. Pastarasis parodė, jog slovėnai yra kitokie, todėl jie atsidūrė priešpriešoje kaip „kiti“.

*Namų*, kaip šalies, idėja aiškiai atsiskleidė sudėtingų simbolinių prasmių užkoduotoje namų aplinkoje. Be to, ryšys tarp namų ir tėvynės taip pat formuotas ir palaikytas įvairiose aplinkose, kuriose buvo kuriamas slovėniškumas. Ši ryšį palaikė ir stiprino materialūs daiktai bei socialinė ir kultūrinė veikla. Manyta, jog, stengdamiesi išsaugoti slovėnų tapatumą ir atmintis, jie iš tikrųjų „kūrė namus kaip šalį“.

Namų sienas paprastai puošė slovėnišką kraštovaizdį vaizduojantys kalendariai, Slovėnijos bažnyčių, kaimų vaizdai ir su Slovėnijos kasdieniu gyvenimu susiję motyvai. Slovėnų migrantai kūrė *namus* taip pat dalyvaudami įvairiose socialinėje ir kultūrinėje veikloje, kuri buvo laikoma slovėniška. Jie nuolat klausėsi slovėnų muzikos, turėjo daug slovėnų populiariosios muzikos įrašų, per palydovinius kanalus žiūrėjo Slovėnijos televizijos programas. Taigi tiek jų pačių, tiek bendruomenės tapatumui palaikyti buvo svarbi galimybė matyti slovėnų kultūros programas. Suprasdami svarbų švietimo vaidmenį, imigrantai organizavo nuolatinės pamokas slovėnų kalba.

Slovėnų bendruomenėse gyvenantys imigrantai saugojo savo tapatumą, kultūrinį paveldą ir atmintis apie tėvynę, stengėsi tai perduoti palikuonims. Kolektyvines atmintis imigrantai išlaikė mokyklose, rengdami šventes ir atlikdami kitą veiklą. Jie organizavo įvairius kultūrinius renginius, leido knygas bei laikraščius slovėnų kalba, išsaugojo kalbą kalbėdami tarpusavyje slovėniškai ir išlaikydami atmintis apie Slovėniją. Straipsnyje teigta, kad migrantų pastangos išsaugoti ir perduoti *tėvynės* idėjas iš tikrųjų daro įtaką *namų* idėjoms. Taigi Slovėnija tampa *namų* pakaitalu.

Tačiau veikimas transnacionalinėse socialinėse erdvėse taip pat labai paveikė jų *namų* suvokimą. Slovėnų bendruomenių simboliniai išteklių sudarė galimybę tapatintis su tautiečiais ir tai palaikyti. Tačiau transnacionalinė veikla tuo pat metu skatino dvilypį ir daugiasluoksnį transnacionalinį prisirišimą. Globalizacija, transnacionaliniai procesai ir transnacionalinių socialinių erdvių kūrimas labai paveikė migrantų *namų* įprasminimą. Todėl kalbant apie *namų* suvokimą reikia atsižvelgti į mobilumo ir stabilumo, pasikeitimo ir tęstinumo, išvykimo iš šalies teritorijos (*deterritorialisation*) ir grįžimo į ją (*reterritorialisation*) sąveiką (Stefansson 2004). *Namų* prasmę migrantų pasakojimuose atskleidžia įkūnytų patirtys, socialiniai tinklai bei politizuoti tapatumai. Su *namų* jausmu sietos ir Slovėnija, ir šalys, kuriose jie gyveno kaip imigrantai. Tačiau migran-



tai konstruoja *namus* ir apibrėžia save remdamiesi Slovėnijos ir Argentinos ar Slovėnijos ir Vokietijos, Prancūzijos santykiu. Gyvendami užsienyje migrantai palaikė ryšius nepaisydami nacionalinių sienų. Vis dėlto tai nebūtinai reiškė, kad jų nacionalinis ryšys ir tapatumai buvo netvirti ir lengvai formuojami. Daugeliu atvejų tai buvo ilgai trunkantis tapatinimasis su nacionaline valstybe, iš kurios jie kilę (dažnai dėl ketinimo grįžti į ją).

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad transnacionaliniai ryšiai ir veikimas paskatino tam tikrą jų tėvynės ir bendruomenių įtaka paremtą tapatinimąsi. Taigi tai susiformavo transnacionalinėje socialinėje erdvėje. Migrantai dažnai išreiškė jausmą, jog jie, gyvendami užsienyje, buvo „labiau slovėnai“, palyginti su niekuomet nemigravusiais ir vis dar tebegyvenančiais savo tėvynėje tautiečiais. Pavyzdžiui, jie daug intensyviau palaikė slovėniškumo jausmą: siekdami išsaugoti nacionalinį tapatumą, jie sąmoningai klausėsi slovėnų muzikos, gamino „savo“ maistą, „kūrė“ savo *namus* naudodami tam tikrus daiktus ir praktikuodami tam tikrą veiklą. Tačiau jiems grįžus atgal ar tik trumpam atvykus į Slovėniją, savastį išreiškiantys jausmai pasikeitė. Daug migrantų sakė, jog jų dalis liko ten. Emociškai ir fiziškai jie susiję su ankstesne gyvenamąja vieta, ir tai labai akivaizdžiai parodo jų kasdienė veikla ir naratyvai.

*Gauta 2009 m. sausio mėn.*

