

A New Subject at the Margins: Migration Studies In Bulgarian Social Sciences

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The paper seeks to critically view the emergence and development of a novel subject in Bulgarian social sciences, i.e. the study of migration. During the 1990s it has gradually become a topic of interest for a constantly growing number of social scientists and other scholars (economists, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, historians, folklorists, etc), turning today in research subject. Certain aspects and types of migration have been subjected to academic discussions already during the period of state socialism. However, the scholarly interest in migration-related issues flourished under the postsocialist condition, which specific processes and developments had to a big extent stimulated the increase of this interest. The context in which migration studies in Bulgaria have developed entwines factors of a varying nature: social, political, and economic developments, changes in scholarly paradigms and adoption of new analytical approaches, global processes, as well as the growing body of publications on migration in an European context, etc.

In this paper I will try to: 1, make an overview of the immediate context in which the interest in migration studies in Bulgaria started to raise; 2, summarize the major migration-related issues described and analyzed by Bulgarian social scientists; 3, critically analyze the methods and terminology in use in these studies, and by this outline some perspectives of future development of migration studies in Bulgaria.

The complex nature of migration attracts the interest of various disciplines. Moreover, worldwide experience in the study of migration processes has proven that cross-disciplinary approaches are most relevant for the comprehensive analysis of these processes. Although migration studies in Bulgaria are still in their initial phase, it would be hard to enumerate the disciplinary background of all the scholars working on the subject. My focal point here will be the study of migration in anthropology, however,

regarded by necessity in the larger context of social sciences (economics, political sciences, sociology, etc), as well as of folklore study and ethnography. In such a perspective I will try to delineate whether and to what extent Bulgarian scholars coming from different disciplines have succeeded to create a common methodological and theoretical framework, in which various aspects of migration are discussed and analyzed.

Major transborder flows of people from and to Bulgaria in a historical perspective

Inasmuch as the bulk of migration studies in the country is nationally-bound, a brief overview of international migration to and from Bulgaria will help to identify the leading topics of interest.

In the almost 130-years history of the independent Bulgarian state (after 1878, the liberation from Ottoman rule), there have been several out-going waves of cross-border migration, each of them bearing its specific nature. The period between the turn of the 20th century and WWI (with the preceding two Balkan wars) witnessed massive movements of people in both directions across the shifting boundaries of the young Balkan states. These were predominantly ethnic movements – forcefully or as a result of bilateral agreements, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Turkey exchanged populations that had remained outside their ‘own’ nation-states.

Up to the world economic crisis in the 1930s another flow of emigration, including from Bulgaria, west- and northbound, had taken place. Bulgarian emigrants at the time took two major tracks – towards the U.S. and Canada (reportedly, the bigger number of migrants), as well as towards different European countries, usually territories that used to be within the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Almost all those migrants left as sojourners but in the long run many of them became settlers, thus forming the Bulgarian diaspora in countries such as Romania, Austria, Hungary, The Czech Republic and Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, Canada, and U.S.A.

The period of state socialism (between September 1944 and November 1989) drastically restricted transnational movement. The communist Bulgarian government set upon the citizens of the country the requirement of getting exit visas in order to travel

abroad, thus bringing to a minimum the international travels of Bulgarians. Yet, there were quite numerous migrations out of Bulgaria during the period, which for the bigger part could be described as ethnic migrations. These include the departure of Bulgarian Jews to Israel, of Armenians, as well as three successive waves of Bulgarian-born Turks to Turkey: in 1950-51 (after the collectivization of agricultural land), in 1968-78 (on the basis of family reunion), and in the summer of 1989 when some 369 839 people of Turkish origin left Bulgaria within a couple of months. Many of the latter returned by the end of the same year but about 200 000 settled permanently in Turkey (Stoyanov 1998: 213-214, Kanev 1998: 112, Zhelyazkova 1998b: 392).

Another kind of migration during the communist period was the political one, and it was far less massive than the previous kind. People who were openly against the ideology and the politics of the communists ruling the country became political emigrants. The biggest number of communists' opponents left the country already by the end of the 1940s. Later on, dissidents and people who just sought for a society offering more economic and other opportunities succeeded to leave the country too, but their number was insignificant. Most of the political immigrants settled down in West European countries, and some went to the U.S.

The beginning of the post-socialist period in Bulgaria was marked by the Turks' exodus from the country. Though the border between Bulgaria and Turkey was open only from June through September 1989, and many of those who left (especially the elderly ones) returned to their home places very soon, the flow from Bulgaria to Turkey did not stop until the mid-1990s, with 1990-91 being the busiest. Many Bulgarian-born Turks in an active age, as well as Gypsies and Bulgarian-speaking Muslims set off for Turkey, in many cases, if not most, looking for more favorable economic conditions there. The flows were so massive in the early 1990s, that some experts still define the migration from Bulgaria during these years as ethnic in nature (Filipov, Tsvetarski, p. 36). I would rather argue that this migration was driven by two major concomitant reasons. One is economic: looking for better opportunities in the then prospering Turkish economy. The other one is the liberalization of border restrictions on behalf of the Bulgarian authorities:

after long years of isolation of the majority of the Bulgarian population from the outer world, they were finally able to freely leave the country for one reason or another.

In any case, not only ethnic Turks left the country for a longer or shorter period in 1990-91, so did many other Bulgarian nationals of various ethnic, religious, educational, and social background. The 'ethnic' specifics was in the choice of direction of departure: Turks left for Turkey, where they expected to find a culturally friendly milieu (same language, same religion, similar customs, as well as friends and relatives already established there), whereas ethnic Bulgarians preferred to travel westward – to Germany, Austria, France, Canada, U.S.A. However, the direction soon changed, and by mid-1990s Turks, along with members of other ethnic groups living in Bulgaria took up the path to several West European countries. As a consequence, many Bulgarian Turks re-emigrated to countries in the West, urged by the unfavorable economic, social, and cultural conditions in Turkey at the time, and encouraged by the access to migratory networks of and information from Turkish guest workers in the West.

What gave impetus to the scholarly interest in migration in recent years?

In this section I will outline major factors that contribute to the growing interest of Bulgarian social scientists in the study and understanding of migration. It is important to specify that by increasing interest I do not understand simply the number of research projects and publications on migration-related issues, but rather the growing understanding that migration practices form a distinctive subject of research and analysis, which calls for the development of adequate methods of and analytical tools for investigation.

The social context:

- The end of socialism and the exodus of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria in the summer of 1989; the 'ethnic' character of migration in the early 1990s (Filipov, Tsvetarski 1993);
- The policies of free movement of Bulgarian citizens: after the fall of communist rule the restrictive citizenship law was abolished (stimulus

for internal migration); so was the requirement for exit visas (greater opportunities for outbound migration);

- The changing international position of Bulgaria: visa-free entrance to the countries of the Schengen treaty (2001), EU-accession process, EU membership (2007), new border regulations towards non-EU countries;
- The economic developments: 1) the transition period: galloping unemployment; inner and outer migration as a survival strategy for people from underdeveloped regions and smaller settlements, for unqualified workers, as well as for certain categories of professionals (Bobeva, Chalakov, Markov 1996); 2) towards 2005: normalization of the labor market, migration as a strategy for achieving better living standards and/ or education, migration as a standard form of social mobility, growing insufficiency of qualified, as well as unqualified cheap labor (inbound migration from third countries); EU integration (refugees from Asia and Africa) and applications for Bulgarian citizenship from neighbor (Macedonia) and other countries (Ukraine, Moldova, etc);
- Adaptation of former migration practices (seasonal work in agriculture and construction building) to the new conditions;
- The international factor (intensification of migration to European countries and within the EU).

All these social realities, as well as the proliferation of literature on migration in a European context, had resulted into the growing interest of Bulgarian scholars of various backgrounds in migration issues. To these the existing experience in the study of migration in the Bulgaria should be added. It comprises historiographies of major migration flows and exchanges of population during various historical periods (outside the scope of this presentation); ethnographic and folkloristic study of migrant communities (the Bulgarian diaspora in Central-Eastern Europe, Central-Eastern European communities in Bulgaria – Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Russians); demographic and statistical surveys on internal migration (see for details Guentceva forthcoming); the

theoretical experience of the study of ethnic and religious minorities in Bulgaria and the Balkans.

In general, migration-related studies in the near past have been characterized by: 1, focusing on the Bulgarian society (Bulgarians abroad; other nationals in Bulgaria); 2, ideological restrictions; 3, methodological particularization (each discipline approaches issues of analysis from its own perspective).

The study of migration in Bulgarian anthropology after 1990 - major topics, characteristic traits, and methodological premises

The emergence of systematic research and publications on migration in Bulgaria I under the impact of the development of migration studies in Europe; moreover, the bulk of Bulgarian publications on the subject view migratory processes and issues in a European perspective. Hence, a number of similarities could be traced out between migration research in Bulgaria and European migration studies. Thus for example, they are interdisciplinary (in the sense that they attract the attention of scholars from various fields of knowledge¹). Whether these studies are interdisciplinary in the sense that they seek to elaborate and implement truly cross-disciplinary analytical and methodological tools, are to be further discussed. No matter that although migration studies increasingly become of interest for specialists from different disciplines, they still obtain a peripheral position in these disciplines (Bommes, Morawska 2005: p. 3). This signifies of the still insufficient theoretical and methodological capacity of migration studies as a distinct epistemological field. A third similarity would be that migration studies are in their greater part nationally embedded (op. cit.: p. 13; see also Favell 2005: p.46)². In Bulgaria, they appeared and still remain such, both in terms of groups and issues of

¹ This is, of course, to a great extent the result of the very nature of migration, which complexity is entwines economic, political, social, demographic, cultural, psychological etc. issues, thus relating to the core of interest of various disciplines.

² For Bulgaria, where migration issues have become topical only recently, this is particularly true, with only sporadic attempts to initiate an interdisciplinary debate on the subject.

research interest, as well as of being highly contingent on the national context and discourses (political, cultural, historical) on migration. This entails yet another feature, viz. the focus on case studies - migration experiences, attitudes, practices rather than on theory. Such a bottom-up approach is inherent to anthropology, but as to what concerns the study of migration, it is often in use in other disciplines too³.

I will further elaborate on these very generally stated similarities between Bulgarian and European migration research in an attempt to outline the specifics of the Bulgarian case. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to draw a systematic comparison between migration studies in Bulgaria and those in other EU-countries. My observations take into account Bulgarian publications on migration, which refer to the field of anthropology/ ethnology and related disciplines (ethnography, folkloristics). These include articles scattered in specialized journals, such as ‘Bulgarian Ethnology’⁴, ‘Bulgarian Folklore’⁵, ‘Studies in Anthropology’⁶, and others, as well as a number of monographs. I also take into consideration the volumes published by the Center for European Refugees, Migration and Ethnic Studies (CERMES) – the first academic

³ See for instance the volume on refugees and asylum seekers (Krasteva 2006), which loosely falls under the umbrella of political sciences and which contains a section describing individual stories and experiences. Such a focus is also characteristic of some of the round tables recently organized by CERMES: ‘Being a foreign woman in Bulgaria’, ‘Being an Afgan in Bulgaria’, ‘Being a refugee in Bulgaria’, ‘Being a Bulgarian in Austria’ etc.

⁴ In 1996 the academic journal ‘Bulgarian Ethnography’ was re-named into ‘Bulgarian Ethnology’, thus claiming an expansion of the journal’s scope.

⁵ Already in 1993 the journal ‘Bulgarian Folklore’ was announced as a specialized periodical in the fields of anthropology, ethnology and folklore studies.

⁶ ‘Studies in Anthropology’ is an annual academic edition of the Department of Anthropology at the New Bulgarian University, published since 2000. This is the first academic periodical in the country, focused exclusively on anthropological study.

agency specialized in the study of various forms of migration⁷. Within scope are also the migration-focused volumes published by IMIR (International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations), a non-profit organisation established in 1992 and supporting interdisciplinary research on various communities and on intercultural relations in a Balkan context (Popova, Hajdinjak 2006, Krasteva 2006, Karamihova 2003, Kyoseva 2002, Petrova 2000). My aim is to outline only some of the specific characteristics of migration studies in Bulgaria therefore the description I make here is neither exhaustive, nor focused on particular authors or volumes⁸.

Some scholars think that anthropology has a particularly relevant approach to the study of migration in comparison with other social sciences; in addition, anthropologists are more disposed to conceptualize migration as transnational in contrast to the often bipolar, nation-centric orientations towards international migration (Kearney 2005: p. 71). This may be one of the explanations why most works on international migration in Bulgaria appear to relate to the domain of anthropology. In the specific situation in Bulgaria, where anthropology is a relatively new academic field comprising (but not necessarily uniting) specialists of various academic backgrounds⁹, one could suggest further reasons. With the diversity of specializations of Bulgarian anthropologists, the discipline seems quite relevant to the complex nature of migration. Moreover, the majority of Bulgarian anthropologists/ ethnologists come from disciplines, which have some experience in the study of certain migrant communities (folklore studies, ethnography, sociology, history). Being a new discipline at the national level,

⁷ CERMES publications, workshops and seminars are not only designed as interdisciplinary but they also combine the academic and public perspectives towards ethnics, migrants and refugees at a national and international scale. About the organisation's goals see its website, www.cermes.info.

⁸ Such an approach may leave the false impression that I am more critical to some works and more positive to others. However, I will concentrate here on trends and traits that are characteristic for the bulk of publications on migration, though I may refer to only a few titles for illustration. I will be more specific in the cases where a trait is best represented or with titles, which introduce a significant new aspect in migration studies.

⁹ See for details Elchinova 2002, Elchinova 2008.

anthropology made its way in the context of postsocialist transformations of the Bulgarian society not least by focusing on novel subjects – one that could not be claimed by ‘mother’ disciplines as indisputably belonging to their domains. These subjects by necessity refer to processes and phenomena new to the Bulgarian public by 1990, such as ethnic and religious studies, postsocialist transformations, EU integration, and, recently, migration. Thus, the high interest towards migration among Bulgarian anthropologists/ethnologists today could be imputed to a combination between academic traditions, search for professional and disciplinary identity, and the pressure of the immediate social environment characterized by intense mobility of people.

The interest of political science in migration issues could be explained in a similar way (a new discipline for Bulgaria, ‘specializing’ in the study of ongoing processes in the dynamically transforming public sphere) and with its international tracks of legitimization. A notable absence is the profound study of economic aspects of migration, despite the common idea that economic migration to and from Bulgaria predominates nowadays. Systematic descriptions and analyses of the short- and long-term economic impact of migration on a local and national level, the influence of migration on the dynamics of the labor market, the forms and use of immigrants’ remittances etc are issues that still call for in-depth examination¹⁰.

Among the factors that determine the choice of topics and approaches in migration studies in Bulgaria is the scarcity and, for that matter, unreliability of statistical data. The National Statistical Institute provides the major statistical sources on migration, such as results from the national censuses (the last one was conducted in 2001) (Vatreshna I vanshna migratsiya) and the Annual Statistical Book. Actual itemized statistics concerning certain criteria of migration or migration to and from certain localities (cities, towns, villages, administrative regions) are hardly available¹¹. As a

¹⁰ About the economic approach to international migration to and from Bulgaria see Rangelova 2008. See also Kaltchev; Vatreshna I vanshna migratsiya).

¹¹ Somewhat better is the situation with the statistical and demographic data about internal migration, however, the latter is rarely regarded in connection with cross-border mobility (see Guentcheva forthcoming).

matter of fact, the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior keeps the strictest records about inflows and outflows of people across the country borders but unfortunately these records are not available to the public on a regular basis¹². This situation is undoubtedly the result of the lack of traditions and resources for carrying out systematic records of population mobility, inherited from the era of state socialism¹³. In the recent years data about Bulgaria can be found in Eurostat. However, the national statistical sources on immigration of the EU-member states rarely contain detailed information about immigrants from Bulgaria because the latter are as a rule among the numerically smallest cohorts of immigrants even in the countries of highest migratory interest for Bulgarian citizens.

The still unsolved problem of providing regular and reliable statistics about internal and international migration in Bulgaria is yet another reason for the higher interest towards migration issues in anthropological, folkloristic, etc. studies and, consequently, for the prevalence of the qualitative approaches in migration research. Thus, issues such as the reasons for and planning of migration, the role of social networks, the processes of adaptation and integration in the receiving society, the patterns and processes of identity construction, the effect of immigration on national attitudes etc. are the major foci of description and analysis in existing publications. Correspondingly, these studies generally draw upon local fieldwork and are limited to certain local communities (Deneva 2007, Elchinova 2005 etc), ethnic (Elchinova 2008, Pamporov 2002, Zhelyazkova 1996 etc) and social groups (Mitev, Riordan 1996, Elchinova 2004,

¹² The records of the Ministry of Interior Affairs are the only reliable source of statistical information about newcomers to Bulgaria – refugees from Asia and Africa, new citizens coming from neighbour (Rmacedonia, Serbia) or other countries (Ukraine, Moldova), new residents from North Europe (Great Britain, the Netherlands) or elsewhere (Japan).

¹³ Under communist rule inner and transborder mobility of the Bulgarian population were seriously restricted by the citizenship law (postulating that a person can only live and work in the settlement of his/ her address registration, with only a few exceptions also regulated by the state) and the requirement for exit visas for international travels. Moreover, data about population mobility were considered a security matter, therefore they were not available for the public.

Guentcheva 2007). As a result, currently we know more about migration processes at a local and even individual level than at a national level. In addition, these locally or ethnically focused investigations only sporadically include comparisons with other case studies – in Bulgaria or abroad¹⁴.

Such an observation inevitably raises the question about the quality of anthropological research and theory in Bulgaria. With respect to the study of migration at least, as of today more is done about the ethnographic practice than about anthropological theory. Indeed, there has been no serious attempt yet at conceptualizing and evaluating theory in regard with migration, at discussing relevant terminology and methods¹⁵. This is not surprising, considering the status of anthropology as a new discipline that lacks steady traditions in comparative studies. Moreover, the novelty of migration as a research subject normally requires a period of accumulation of empirical data and ethnographic descriptions. It is however of prime significance for the future development of migration studies in Bulgaria that the international theoretical achievements in the field become consistently embedded in the local studies and research, as well as that the latter are planned with the idea to contribute to the further development of migration theory, terminology and method. For the moment, the academic discourse on the subject in Bulgarian social sciences is still underdeveloped.

As it was mentioned above, migration studies in Bulgaria are deeply rooted in the national background – they explore either Bulgarian emigration abroad, or migrants from other countries in Bulgaria. More precisely, the scope of these studies encompasses

¹⁴ Despite attempts at contextualization, the few works that study immigrant communities of Bulgarian nationals in receiving countries do not pay much attention to drawing comparisons with other immigrant communities in the same countries (Maeva, Elchinova, Karabinova, Mancheva, Karamihova, Deneva). The same holds true for the studies of the Bulgarian minorities in Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland etc, which do not systematically compare the situation of the diaspora in one host country with another/ others (Penchev, Mihailova, Ganeva-Raitcheva, Rashkova etc).

¹⁵ There have been few initiatives such as the recent international conference “Migration to and from Southeastern Europe”, which contribute to the initiation of such scholarly debates but still no seminal studies.

Bulgarian-born Turks settlers in Turkey, as well as in West-European countries (Bochkov 2002, 2004, Elchinova 2005, 2008, Maeva 2002, Zheljazkova 1996, Karabinova 2005 and others); the Bulgarian diaspora in Hungary (Ganeva-Raitcheva 2004, Rashkova 2003, 2005, Bokova2005), the Czech Republic (Penchev), Slovakia (Rashkova 2003), Poland (Mihailova), etc.; Bulgarian economic short- and long-term migrants to West Europe and the USA (Monova, Karabinova 2003, Deneva 2007, Guentcheva 2006, Elchinova forthcoming, Karamihova 2003); immigrant communities in Bulgaria (Czechs, Poles, Russians etc.) that have settled in the country in the first half of the twentieth century or during the communist period (Penchev, Mihailova, Anastasova, Kyoseva 2002 etc). Practically very little attention is paid to non-European settlers from the 1970s-1980s, more precisely to Arabs/ Palestinians (Trifonova) and Kurds (Mitzeva, Alexiev); Latin American and Vietnamese migrants have not been the object of any such study, although a new wave of workers from Vietnam is on its way with the growing need for qualified and unqualified workers in certain businesses like construction building.

Refugee studies are a separate strand (see Krasteva 2006, 2005), focusing on the Balkan context (Krasteva 2006a), Bulgarians as refugees (Sultanova 2006, Tcholakova 2006), asylum seekers in Bulgaria, etc. The new residents from Northern Europe, whose number has perceivably increased in the years immediately before and after Bulgaria's membership in the EU, are still not at the core of researchers' interest (see Elchinova forthcoming).

The stress on national-specific processes is also indicative of the state of art of anthropological research and, larger, of social sciences in Bulgaria. Because of ideological (during socialism) and social-economic conjuncture, the cultural 'Other' are more often than not sought for in the home society, as well as in the neighbour countries or the countries sharing similar (Slavic, Balkan) cultural legacies. Extended fieldwork abroad, based on participant observation, is still rather an exception than the routine practice of Bulgarian anthropologists. This hampers the development of comparative research and narrows the contribution of Bulgarian scholars in an international perspective.

The nationally restricted scope of migration studies in Bulgaria is evident not only with regard to the objects of observation, but also in the scope and perspective of investigation. Briefly, migration studies are strongly affected by social and political discourses in the public sphere. The latter usually overtake and predetermine the nature and direction of scholarly debates on migration. Intensive public speaking of brain-drain, of the economic and demographic weakening of the nation as a result of outbound migration of economically and reproductively active parts of the population, the significance of emigrants' remittances for the national economy, or the 'new Bulgarians' (residents coming from developed countries) for example has given impetus to researchers' interest in these issues. Public debates on migration vary in their evaluation of migratory processes and in the perspective in which migration is viewed. These shifts reflect also on academic studies, no matter how unbiased the latter strive to be.

I have already demonstrated that migration studies in Bulgaria are generally organized around a target community or group, and not so much focused on a certain analytical issue (such as marital patterns or impact on the economic and social capital of sending and receiving societies, or other). This reflects on the prevalent methods and approaches: the bulk of publications on migration can be described as case or community studies dominated by qualitative, bottom-up approaches. This is to a great extent a result of the impact of the research patterns and traditions in Bulgarian folkloristics, ethnography and sociology, set already during the socialist era. Thus for example, throughout the 1980s the founding conception in Bulgarian folklore studies was that of folklore as cultural system, operating at a local and regional level. It gave impetus to the flourishing of a kind of holistic examination of rural communities as bearers of the local variables of folklore culture, and the semantic and functional interrelatedness between kinship system, social and role structure and normative system of the local community and the components of its traditional culture¹⁶. The fieldwork format of complex

¹⁶ This approach has been traced out in the seminal work of T. Iv. Zhivkov (1977) and in his successive works, and was established as paradigmatic for the Bulgarian folklorists since the late 1970s through 1992, due to Zhivkov's administrative and scholarly authority as the head of the Institute of Folklore at BAS, and a leading Bulgarian folklorist.

expeditions Garnizov 2006), investigating traditional livelihood and lifestyles, material culture, folk art etc., were also typical for Bulgarian ethnography and, to some extent, sociology. It is worth outlining in this respect the traditions of Slavic and Balkan folkloristics and ethnography, which were among the pioneers of comparative cultural studies in the country. They accumulated experience in the study of immigrant Slavic communities already in the period of state socialism. Later, in the 1990s this experience transformed and merged into the paradigm of ethnic studies, to expand in the last years in scope and method towards the area of migration studies.

The focus on communities – local, ethnic or religious – directly connects migration and ethnic studies. The nature of this relationship could be described as a shift of scholarly interest from ethnic to migration studies, to borrow a phrase from A. Krasteva (2004). Krasteva views the link between ethnic and migration studies in terms of the analytical tools applied by Bulgarian social scientists in both fields, as well as with respect to public attitudes (Krasteva 2004a: p.5). She also emphasizes the preference to the ethno-symbolic approaches towards the study of ethnic identities, as well as the neglecting of the target group's standpoint¹⁷ (Krasteva 2004b: p. 34).

Regarding the shift of scholarly interest from ethnic to migration studies, I would further outline the continuity in method, focus and orientation. Ethnic studies had become a sphere of prime interest for the Bulgarian social sciences and the humanities immediately after the change of political and social order in 1990. It could be claimed that this was the research field in which anthropology and ethnology emancipated from 'mother' disciplines and shaped their profile. Interest in ethnicity-related issues had its

¹⁷ I disagree that the latter observation holds true for the study of ethnic communities. A big number of studies in anthropology, ethnology, folkloristics more or less successfully reveal the standpoint of the community under study, or seek to present various points of view (of the state official ideology, or of neighbour communities) to their culture and identity. It is nevertheless correct that some of the representative volumes on ethnic groups in Bulgaria, where historiographical approaches prevail, tend to present minority groups rather as objects than as subjects of history etc. (see for instance Krasteva 1998, Stoyanov 1996, etc.). The same holds for minority representations of minority groups in media discourses (Dainov 2004).

ideological and evaluative aspects: it became possible after the idea of the homogeneity of the Bulgarian nation and society, instigated by communist authorities with all possible means stopped being the official policy; furthermore, it served as an instrument for the revalorization of academic identities after the social transformations, for building a new, ideologically unbiased image of the social sciences (Elchinova 2002). For Bulgarian folklorists and ethnographers for instance, it was only natural to return to the local communities they had already extensively explored, in order to study them this time with regard to their ethnic and religious diversity. This is how ethnic community-centered research developed and resulted into the establishment of an epistemological pattern, commonly applied in studies of cultural diversity, including the study of migrant groups. Identity construction and expressions with its basic markers – language, name, shared memory, custom – formed an analytical matrix, built in a rich number of articles and monographic studies on the various minority groups living in Bulgaria¹⁸ - from the sizeable communities of Turks, Roma, and Pomaks to the plenty of small ones (Karakachans, Gagauzes, Alevies, Jews, Armenians, etc).

Unlike in today's migration studies, however, in ethnic communities-oriented works bottom-up approaches are not the only ones and attempts have been made at evaluation of theory, critical assessment of basic concepts and methods (Krasteva et al 1995, Krasteva 1996, Fotev 1994, Zhivkov 1992, to mention just a few titles). Although ethnic studies in Bulgaria practically apply different (and sometimes inconsistent) approaches to ethnic and cultural identity, the dominant perspective is an instrumentalist and constructivist one. More often than not intercultural dialogue and transactionalist terminology form the background of the studies on ethnic communities, yet they rarely become their analytical goal and tools (see also Krasteva 2004b: p.34). The ethno-symbolic approaches seem to be more favoured, causing, in turn, the reinforcement of

¹⁸ The same pattern underlies a number of studies of historical immigrant communities, entirely completed in the ethnic study's paradigm (terminology, theoretical background, approach) (see for example Anastasova, Eldarov 2002, Barouh 2000, Pimpireva 1998, Zhelyazkova et al 1997 etc). In them, no or little reference is made to migration-specific theory and analyses.

ethnicity as core explanatory concept in analyses. The overestimated role of ethnicity often permeates studies of migrant communities, too¹⁹.

To summarize, the influence of the ethnic study's paradigm on migration studies in Bulgaria, as well as the restrictedness of the latter in terms of theory, analytical tools and scope, have resulted into the relative monotony and even one-sidedness of migration research and publications. Central are such issues as constructing and re-constructing identity in immigration, adaptation and integration of immigrants into the host society, the role of social networks (based on kinship, local affiliation, vocation etc), preservation of cultural traditions from the place of birth, intercultural relations, contacts with the society of origin, images of and attitudes towards immigrants. Politics of migration on behalf of sending and receiving societies are not so often at scope (Krasteva 2004, Mancheva, Dimitrova 1998). Forms of social participation and institutional organization are paid even less attention (for an excellent example see Ganeva-Raitcheva 2005; see also Elchinova 2006, 2008, Mihailova 2008). The issue of social remittances - the impact of migrants on ideas, behaviours and social capital in the sending society (DeWind, Holdaway 2005) - has not been tackled yet by Bulgarian scholars. Despite the growing number of descriptions of the migratory patterns and practices of certain local and ethnic communities, systematic discussions on important evoked by migration transformations in family structure, marital patterns, gender roles, or of the idea of local community, and others are still to appear. Typology of migration practices and the relationship between various types of migration also call for attention. The very concept of community, which is central in the greater part of Bulgarian studies on migration, needs to be problematized and reconsidered in the situation of migration. For the moment, despite the rhetoric of transnationalism, largely adopted in these studies, which puts forward the surmounting of differences and ethnic boundaries, it appears that the semantics of multiculturalism, i.e. of

¹⁹ See for example the otherwise informative study on the migratory experiences of the Muslim Bulgarian inhabitants of the village of Ribnovo, which are regarded as ethnic-specific by the author (Deneva). For a critical view on the fixation on ethnicity see Elchinova 2005.

stressing on cultural diversity, ethnic distinction and even competition²⁰ springs up behind these terms.

Conclusion

In the last few years the social sciences in Bulgaria have been making their initial steps in the study of migration. Their approach to the new subject has been influenced by previous experiences, especially from the field of ethnic studies. From the above discussion it has become clear that migration studies in Bulgaria are still limited in scope and approach. For their successful future development it is important that researchers make efforts to achieve: analytical complexity of studied issues, systematic study of migration-related phenomena (of their economic, social, cultural, psychological or other dimensions), reconsideration of theory, terminology and method. It is also important to avoid one-sided analyses and, especially, to overcome the taken for granted role of preoccupation with community and ethnicity for the explanation of migratory processes; instead, more attention should be paid to gender, kinship, information networks etc., which are no less significant than ethnicity in the shaping of migratory practices. The search for wider contextualization – home and host society, European context, global processes – would also contribute to the in-depth descriptions of issues under study, especially if it is achieved by means of comparison. Finally, and most importantly, the various specialists tempted in the study of migration should insist on developing a truly interdisciplinary theoretical framework, one that would be most relevant to the complex nature of migration and, respectively, most productive for the understanding of its various forms and acts.

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²⁰ For the interpretation of the prefixes *multi-*, *inter-* and *trans-* see Giordanno 2005.

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