# 77 'settled in mobility':engendering post-wallmigration in Europe

Mirjana Morokvasic<sup>1</sup>

## abstract

The end of the bi-polar world and the collapse of communist regimes triggered an unprecedented mobility of people and heralded a new phase in European migrations. Eastern Europeans were now not only 'free to leave' to the West but more exactly 'free to leave and to come back'. In this text I will focus on gendered transnational, crossborder practices and capabilities of Central and Eastern Europeans on the move, who use their spatial mobility to adapt to the new context of post-communist transition. We are dealing here with practices that are very different from those which the literature on 'immigrant transnationalism' is mostly about. Rather than relying on transnational networking for improving their condition in the country of their settlement, they tend to 'settle within mobility,' staying mobile 'as long as they can' in order to improve or maintain the quality of life at home. Their experience of migration thus becomes their lifestyle, their leaving home and going away, paradoxically, a strategy of staying at home, and, thus, an alternative to what migration is usually considered to be - emigration/immigration. Access to and management of mobility is gendered and dependent on institutional context. Mobility as a strategy can be empowering, a resource, a tool for social innovation and agency and an important dimension of social capital - if under the migrants' own control. However, mobility may reflect increased dependencies, proliferation of precarious jobs and, as in the case of trafficking in women, lack of mobility and freedom.

# keywords

transnational mobility; gender; post-wall Europe; migration

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# introduction

The end of the bi-polar world and the collapse of communist regimes triggered an unprecedented mobility of persons and heralded a new phase in European migrations. People in the Eastern part of the continent were not only '*free to leave*' to the West, but more exactly '*free to leave and to come back*' (Morokvasic, 1996, 1999). What used to be an exodus in the time of the cold war could become a back and forth movement, as it historically used to be. Departure no longer implied leaving forever and does not, as before, exclude return.

The transborder and short-term movements in the form of shuttles – regular or undocumented, for purposes of work or/and trade – have become the most widespread pattern in the post-1989 European migrations (Wallace and Stola, 2001; Morawska, 2000). They are not male dominated as migrations used to be, especially in the beginning of the South–North movements of labour of the 1960s and the 1970s (Wallace, 2001; Kosmarskaya, 1999; Koser and Lutz, 1998; Morokvasic, 1996, 2002). The post-communist transition has put on the move a large number of women who are looking for opportunities, trying to face new market conditions or to escape the dominant discourse of nationalist projects in their home countries. Their mobility, in general, mirrors the newly acquired or rediscovered freedom of movement, but it can also be a result of coercion and human trafficking. As in other parts of the world, it reflects both new possibilities but also a proliferation of precarious jobs and increasing dependencies.

In this text, I focus on transnational, cross-border networks, practices and capabilities of these Central and Eastern Europeans on the move. These moves are the result of individual initiatives (rather than household strategies) in which women and men on the move act as social innovators as they use spatial mobility to adapt to the new context of post-communist transition. They are largely influenced by the institutional context and the legal status migrants are awarded in the target country. They are also gendered. Engendering migrant transnationalism by shifting away from the context of North American *settler societies*, in which the transnational perspective on contemporary migration has mostly developed, to this post-wall migration in Europe promises to overcome the predominant focus on the 'national' in most of transnational scholarship (Vertovec and Cohen, 2000; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999; Portes *et al.*, 1999; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Portes, 1996, 1999, 2001; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992, 1995). It also points to the importance of power structures and gender hierarchies, which either enhance or limit the capabilities of transnational actors' 'resistance from below'.

## transnationalism and its limits

Classic accounts of immigration have increasingly been found inadequate for understanding contemporary migration processes. This shortfall is partially overcome through the use of a transnational perspective, a paradigm (Faist, 2000; Portes, 1996, 1999; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992, 1995), that offers an alternative to the classic assimilation tradition but nevertheless builds on previous approaches (Faist, 2000; Vertovec and Cohen 2000). It makes room to understand the simultaneous attachment to two nations that many migrants engage in. Some analysts, however, situate their appraisal of the transnational perspective within the ambit of assimilation theory (Kivisto, 2001) and criticize it for glorifying what within the assimilationist approach would be considered an 'obstacle to integration.' Placed within the scope of the classic immigration studies and defined as a subset of 'assimilationism,' rather than an alternative to it, the theory of transnational social relations is seen as yet another description of a possible outcome of immigrant adaptation to the receiving country.

However, transnationalists make little room to capture the phenomena of shortterm transnational mobility. Besides, the concern of most proponents of transnationalism in migration studies is about durability and sustainability of transnational links over time, thus excluding phenomena which may be ephemeral, although transnational in essence, such as the mobility and migration from and within Eastern and Central Europe that I want to focus on in this text. The feminist literature on global labour migration, on the other hand, provides a tool for understanding transient migration and the embedding of social practices in multiple places. These arguments are elaborated in the growing literature on gender and transnationalism (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997), as well as in debates around the reconfiguration of reproductive labour (Parenas, 2001). What is missing from this analysis is the use of transnationalist practices as employment-related strategies among women migrants. There is little recognition of the use of transnationalism as an entrepreneurial tool that has been made possible through histories of migration, shifting immigration regulations and economic restructuring. Recognizing the conditions under which transnationalist practices occur provides a different slant to transnational practices; it shows the width of the spectrum of migration, from migration of choice to enforced migration and the relative power of different agents in different forms of transnational labour.

In this paper, I argue that for migrants from Eastern Europe transnationalism offers 'a space of possibilities'. However, this is a contradictory space and its potential will vary based on a number of factors. Thus, these spaces can only be understood through a detailed examination of what migrants may gain through their transnational practices in the different sectors in which they work, a matter to which I turn in the next two sections. We also need to understand how migrants utilize social networks differently to enable this migration and its transnational practices. Finally, transnational networks may also present limits to migrants when the power of migrants within these networks becomes foreclosed. The rest of this paper explores these three issues, drawing on empirical studies on Central-East European migration and migrants, including my own field work among Polish migrants,<sup>2</sup> and discusses different facets of their transnational mobility. In the last section, I will attempt to locate the observed phenomena within the debate on transnational migration and discuss some limits of the present scope of the transnational perspective in the light of post-wall transnational migration in Europe.

# mobile cross-border entrepreneurs and social innovators

Migration has always been a risk-averting strategy for individuals and households. In post-communist societies' race toward the market economy, many people react to the transition economy by hitting the road, trying to avoid being left on the fringes of their societies engaged in rapid, but unpredictable, transformation. They are in fact optimizing the impact of risks by transnationalizing them, managing opportunities and obstacles in their home and destination country or countries within a transnational social space by linking people and territories across borders through work and trading. They are doing it in a context in which possibilities of immigration and settlement and those of regular employment are extremely limited. Among those employed regularly on a short-term basis<sup>3</sup> the majority are men; others on the move have few alternatives but to become 'tourists' engaged in work and/or trade. They use previous official employment to open up the possibility of further trips, relying on well-established networks to do so.

Different kinds of shuttle migration for purposes of trade and work have indeed become the major 'occupation,' 'profession' (Iglicka, 1999; Irek, 1998), or a 'career' as Potot (2002) suggests, for millions of people in post-communist Europe. Thus, in my survey of Polish commuters, some of my informants joked about themselves 'English is a nationality, so is the French. Being Polish is an occupation.'

The joke could apply not only to the Polish 'pioneers', the short-term commuter labourers and suitcase traders operating since the 1980s (Okolski, 2001; Irek, 1998; Jazwinska and Okolski, 1996), but also to those commuting to work in Greece (Romaniszyn, 1996), or in Belgium, to Rumanians commuting between their country and France (Potot, 2002; Diminescu and Lagrave, 2000), or to Rumanians, Poles, Ukrainians, Moldavians circulating between their country and Italy (Weber, 1998); to Russian *tchelnoki*, coming and going at the Istanbul bazaar (Karamustafa, 2001; Peraldi, 2001; Blascher, 1996), to Byelorussians or Ukrainians in Poland (Okolski, 2001; Iglicka, 1999), to *Mrówki (Ants)* (Irek, 1998) and other migrants from Eastern Europe in the Polish or Czech informal labour markets (Morawska, 2000; Sword, 1999). Such mobility patterns are historically rooted in patterns of mobility in the COMECON space even before 1989. They also remind us of historical 2 | have been observing the developments of the "Polish market'' in Berlin since 1989. From 1990 to 1992 two sets of interviews were carried out with Polish informants: 288 interviews were conducted at different border crossings between Germany and Poland. Among the interviewees 21 persons were selected for in-depth interviews which were conducted either in Poland or in Germany (Morokvasic. 1996).

**3** In Germany, every year there are over 300,000 jobs — 'exceptions' to the 1974 labour migration stop. They are filled mainly by Polish men. figures of commuting migrants called *golondrinas* (Page, 1996), of the 17–18th century *colporteurs* (Fontaine, 1993), *Sachsengänger* (Weber, 1980) or *Pre-ußengänger*, *Wanderhändler* and *Wanderarbeiter* (Bade, 1992).

Mobility and the capacity to be mobile play an important part in the strategies of these migrants. Rather than trying to immigrate and settle in the target country, migrants tend to 'settle within mobility,' staying mobile 'as long as they can' in order to improve or maintain the quality of life at home (Potot, 2002; Diminescu and Lagrave, 2000; Morokvasic, 1992, 1999). Migration thus becomes their lifestyle, their leaving home and going away, paradoxically, a strategy of staying at home, and, thus, an alternative to emigration. In that sense, they are the Simmelian, post-modern types of migrants, both insiders and outsiders. Their transnational mobility can be a resource (Irek, 1998; Morokvasic, 1992, 1999), an important dimension of their social capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) $^4~$ when and if they can mobilize it. Therefore, remaining in control of their own mobility is a conditio sine qua non for achieving the original target of social promotion (or status preservation) at home: the more they have control over their own mobility the more they are able to use it as a resource. The less control they have, the less they are likely to use (benefit from) the returns of their mobile strategies. Given the institutional context, sometimes combined with cultural norms, access to and control of mobility and migration are gendered.

**4** 'Social capital is the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing durable networks of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 95).

**5** Aussiedler (meaning expatriates) are persons of German origin ('ethnic German') residing in former communist countries, who could claim the right to 'return' to Germany. Since 1993 this right can be claimed only by those from Kasachstan.

### opportunity structures and social networks

Migrants who initiate the moves are in general those who enjoyed free circulation because of their stable legal status and/or dual citizenship (as asylum seekers or as German citizens) even before 1989. Thus, half a million Aussiedler<sup>5</sup> originating from and residing in Poland are estimated to have kept their double residence so that they could commute between Poland and Germany (Jazwinska and Okolski, 1996). Likewise, Germans from Transsilvania use their status of citizen or permanent resident in Germany to circulate between Rumania and Germany, while residing de facto in Rumania (Michalon, 2003). Doomernik (1997), in his study of Jews from the former Soviet Union, suggests that two-thirds of his informants declared that their emigration was motivated by the geographic proximity between Germany and Russia and by the possibility of commuting for commercial reasons. Polish guestworkers in the GDR as well as Russian military personnel were among the first to engage in suitcase trading — they could easily move back and forth during a period when others could not (Peraldi, 2001; Irek, 1998). Their stable legal status provided a good basis for circulation. Thus, suitcase trading took place within the COMECON countries before spreading to the West. However, West Berlin had a special entry regime for Poles even before 1989 (up to one month visa-free stay).

In the new situation where borders have become permeable, women and men on the move can live and benefit from unemployment payments, health insurance and social security in Poland, Bulgaria or Rumania, but work from time to time in Germany, France or Italy; or they may receive pension or unemployment benefits in Germany, but live in Poland or in Rumania, where living costs and thereby the quality of life they can achieve is better. They take advantage of the structural disequilibrium, of legislation gaps and market imperfections, in order to move. Those who do not move rely on those who are mobile for their business activities and personal promotion. Migrants use their experience in circumventing the system during the communist period when travelling and consuming was a way of overcoming the uniformity and inadequacies of supply (Wessely, 1999; Irek, 1998). After 1989, hitting the road has become a strategy for supplementing insufficient income. Migration has become one of the many strategies developed by individuals in order to resist the decline of their social condition at home.

Polish migrants can rely on strong networks of a stable population of compatriots who settled in Germany in the 1980s as refugees or as *Aussiedler*. In 1990, 22 million Poles travelled abroad, which was 15 times more than a decade earlier when travel 'abroad' mainly meant travel to communist countries and travelling to the West was the privilege of a minority (Morokvasic, 1992). They were followed by others who took advantage of already established travel routes and migrant niches. Rumanians tend to utilize the routes and strategies traced by Rumanian gypsies across Europe (Potot, 2002). Likewise, the immigration of Turkish speakers from the former URSS and the Balkans to Istanbul opened the commercial route and adapted the local commerce to the taste of Eastern Europe, facilitating the arrival of a much broader spectrum of future traders from the area (Peraldi, 2001).

The migration of citizens of the former COMECON countries, who are now candidates for joining the EU, has been facilitated not only by liberalized exit legislation, but also by relaxed visa requirements (visa requirements were first lifted for Poles in April 1991 and last for Rumanians, on January 1, 2002).<sup>6</sup> The Schengen space, with controls at the outer borders and practically no internal border controls, also facilitates this circulation. After having crossed the first border, migrants have no difficulty circulating within the space, from one member state to the other, exploring opportunities, choosing more attractive destinations and abandoning those that become difficult to access or to remain in.

A further incentive for the moves is a persistent demand for labour in certain sectors in the West, which is partially covered by official recruitment into shortterm work programmes. These official programmes in turn are a stepping stone for establishing contacts and entry into the informal labour market, especially for those migrants who do not have networks to rely on. Thus, as the EU countries try to regulate migration with different short-term contracts, they also indirectly produce disguised migration practices. **6** The visa-free regime is limited to the citizens of the accession and EU candidate countries. On the sending side, the transition to a market economy has 'freed' workers. They officially have jobs and social rights inherited from socialism, but often they do not obtain any salary at all or it is insufficient. As one of my informants said, 'In Poland salaries are too high to starve on and too low to live on'.

For women, an important reason for migration is the legacy of state socialism which institutionalized some forms of equality between women and men and made paid employment a norm for women, while leaving intact existing gendered power relationships. So when women were made redundant with the collapse of communist economy, they took up jobs abroad as part of their caring role for the family: 'I had to feed my kids' is a justification behind most of the income-generating activities of commuting female workers.

Women in post-communist countries are therefore readily available to respond to the demand in destination countries. However, these women have little access to regular employment (Rudolph, 1996), and when they are recruited they tend to experience de-skilling to a greater extent than men do. They also have less access to training schemes adapted to the labour market demand (Quack, 1994). As a result, women turn to jobs in the informal sector, as domestic helpers or caretakers, or engage in trading and prostitution. Working as an *au pair* remains one of the few legal means of a *de facto* labour migration (Hess and Lenz, 2001).

To summarize, geographic proximity, low transport costs between regions and sharp development and wage differentials encourage people to move. The wealth gap between their own country and those on their journey or destination, now within reach, makes migration attractive. People respond by capitalizing on a specific resource – their capacity to stay mobile for a long time – which is an immense advantage in comparison to those who do not or cannot move. The Poles I interviewed could make the equivalent of one month's salary in Poland, and sometimes even two or three times that on a single trip. The average net profit of one trip could be even 30 times the average monthly salary (Iglicka, 1999).

More than half the persons we surveyed relied on transnational networks of friends, formed on the basis of shared experiences of working in the target country, travelling the same distances, investing in the same spaces and dealing with the same intermediaries (travel agents, guides, recruiters, lodgers, train attendants, border-guards, customs officers, shop owners). At home, networks enabled migrants to resort to neighbours or hire professional substitutes to fill the gaps created by their absences from home.

The strength of these ties lies in their functionality and efficiency in terms of the objectives pursued rather than in community-based logistics (Peraldi, 2001; Morokvasic, 1999). In this sense, these ties come close to what Granovetter (1972) called *weak ties*. They connect members of different groups on both sides of the border into networks of information and assistance; they are acquaintances based on trust and reciprocity, rather than kin and personal friends.

In Brussels, where only 2000 Polish citizens are officially registered, but twenty times as many are estimated to be present at any moment, there emerged a micro-economy based on Poles as consumers and clients. Chez Olga is a name Poles gave to a café where they meet and which is run by Italians and a Polish foods store is run by a Hungarian woman... (*Die Zeit*, 20 November 2003)

For the shuttle migrant-traders whose sojourns are usually of shorter duration than the trips of those who engage in other type of work, the functioning of the networks is determined more by their activity than by 'common origin.'<sup>7</sup> The networks are built on a territory where precarious solidarities operate for the time of a journey or successive journeys to dissolve shortly thereafter and are rebuilt anew with other people during other journeys. The specific – but nonethnic – resource of these migrants is their own readiness and availability to be mobile: their 'savoir se mouvoir' – 'a know-how-to-move' (Tarrius, 1992) or their 'transnational capability' – to borrow Al Ali *et al.s*' (2001) expression.

7 Given the 'panslavic' familiarity in languages, the network may appear to be 'compatriot,' yet consists of functional intermediaries of different origins but all specialized in 'mobility management'

# organizing mobility in different occupational sectors

Women play a significant role in suitcase trading (Karamustafa, 2001; Peraldi, 2001; Iglicka, 1999; Irek, 1998; Morokvasic, 1996), though this varies from group to group and from situation to situation. People travel in mixed groups: gender and intergenerational role attribution during trips provides a family-like profile and facilitates both the border crossings and trade. Children and grandparents (grandmothers were over represented) make the trip look 'private', thus reducing the likelihood of the group being controlled by custom officials. Being inconspicuous, they would often be in charge of transporting 'sensitive' goods. Usually, neither children nor grandmothers belonged to the genuine family, although some women (and a few men) did take their children along.

Men act as group leaders and 'protectors' and are often seen as such even outside their own travel group. Women, on the other hand, are assigned the role of negotiators with customs officers and other key persons during the trip. It is believed that they would be more successful in deterring the officers' attention and that the officers would be more lenient with women than they are with men: 'after all, one does not throw out of a train a woman!' (lrek, 1998: p. 46). This traditional role attribution is also 'useful' in trade transactions as women are supposed to use their 'charms' – which sometimes implied providing sexual services – to attract customers or get a better deal when selling or buying goods. This occasional prostitution is considered a necessary by-product of a trip, important for successful transactions. Women keep the extra gain for themselves. Back home, they are not unduly stigmatized for what they do. In any case, trading and 'smuggling' are already considered shameful activities by those who do not do it, so the group on the move are usually secretive about their activities abroad, sex services included. Thus, although the cross-border trading trips engage both men and women, their functioning relies on unquestioned gender relationships and hierarchies which assign to women and men different expectations and positions, to the point that every younger good-looking woman on the 'Polish market' or in the train is considered as a potential prostitute (*cihodajka*) (Irek, 1998). Women who manage to remain independent use their capital to improve their condition by setting up a business, renegotiating or breaking an unsatisfactory relationship back home, divorcing an alcoholic husband, etc. Others, because of the lack of other alternatives or institutional obstacles to mobility are obliged to rely on a 'protector', or a trafficker in order to cross the border. This, as outlined below, leads to a situation where women are no longer in control of their mobility. It also petrifies the gender power relationships and hierarchies.

Besides the social promotion at home — impossible without these travels — these short-term trading trips also have a 'learning function': they are a stepping stone for would-be entrepreneurs who accumulate initial capital and go on to create established 'export—import' businesses or small manufacturing outlets which produce for established factories in the West (clothing, dental equipment, etc.). In that sense, the traders are the pioneers of the transition to the market economy in the so-called transition countries.

The patterns described above cut across all social strata, including the well educated with university degrees and the highly skilled (between 12% and 25% are in this category). For the middle class people, travelling abroad at intervals for work or trade purposes provides for the quality of life that the badly paid, high status job at home cannot.

I am a neuropathologist and love my job, which I do not want to leave. However, my salary is not enough to live. That is why on Fridays after work I take the bus and with my bags full of goods I go to Poland. Early on Saturday morning I am already on the bazaar, and in the evening Sunday I am back home. The income is small but allows me to keep my head above the water for a while.

(Khomra, 1994: 147, quoted in Iglicka, 1999)

Thus, mobility is rarely a survival strategy, rather it is seen as complementing the income at home. It satisfies status requirements of a new middle class (Potot, 2002), enabling it to consume goods which otherwise would be inaccessible: housing, housing equipment, cars and fashionable clothing.

People working in agriculture move too. The people I interviewed were on their way to plant strawberry plants in the icy earth of Sweden or Norway in early spring, or to work in the fields of Palatinat (Germany) in Easter time or harvest grapes in October. These jobs originally attracted both women and men, but the latter predominate among those legally recruited. For the rest of the travelling workers, the demand has been mostly gender specific: men work on the construction sites or renovate flats, repair cars or do industrial cleaning (on ships and in factories), and women have found a niche in the reproductive sphere, cleaning and caring for the elderly. Irrespective of their activity, the majority do not seek to emigrate for good. As among traders, commuting for work is an alternative to emigration. As they see it as a means of social promotion at home, they seek to preserve jobs as well as family ties there. They are genuinely living in/between two worlds, one foot there, another here, with their base being their hometown or village (Morokvasic, 1992, 1996).

During their more or less long period of mobility (sometimes over 15 years), migrants' activity as well as their legal status could shift several times, from trading to regular and then to clandestine work, from money exchange to seasonal work in agriculture, and to trading again. Combining different income-generating activities is also common. However, provided that the freedom of travelling back and forth exists and is not jeopardized by institutional obstacles (visas), the migrants tend to organize their cross-border lives in a transnational space so as to optimally respond to obligations at home and to opportunities abroad.

This capacity to be mobile is different for those who either obtain a permanent residence or citizenship or have to get a visa, or, within a visa-free regime, have to work out strategies within the time limits of their tourist status. The former can mobilize social capital that the latter cannot. This gives them power which shapes their own mobility strategies as well as those of all others who depend on them: they can set up a business based on the mobility of others either providing lodging or organizing their work.

Beate, 39, is a nurse from Wroclaw. She comes to Berlin two or three times a year and stays approximately one to two months each time to take care of an old blind man. With four of her fellow nurses she has set up a system of rotation between Wroclaw and Berlin which has been functioning for years when I met her. They take turns taking care of the man, and they substitute for each other both in Berlin and in the hospital in Wroclaw. In Berlin they were paid 100 DM a day, almost their monthly salary in Poland. Beate never thought of leaving Poland and 'given my age, it is too late for me anyway.'

#### (Morokvasic, 1996: 146)

Most of the Polish women who commute to work do reproductive work - as domestic helpers or caring for the elderly. Thanks to the rotation system, which they set up with a couple of other women, they can continue to take care of their own families at home. This smoothly functioning 'self-managed' rotation system that Polish women have set up to optimize the opportunities and minimize the obstacles relative to their reproductive paid and unpaid work relies on solidarity, reciprocity and trust of its participating members. The regularity of commuting is determined by their care for the family remaining in Poland: the one whose child is sick would be replaced by another one from the group. Besides enabling women a transnational, double presence, combining life 'here' and 'there', the rotation system yields other opportunities for agency. First, women avoid being captured in an institutionalized form of dependency vis-a vis a single employer, which is the case with live-in maids, for instance (Anderson, 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003). Second, their constant mobility enables women to avoid being trapped in an illegal status — as long as it takes place within the 3 months visa-free period for tourists. The illegal character of the work done by a 'tourist' is more easily concealed in a private household than on a construction site. In this sense, women have more opportunities for bridging the formal and informal than men do. Third, in the sector where upward mobility is impossible, and where most of the East European women are de-classed and de-skilled, the experience in a rotation system can be a stepping stone to setting up a business, that is, one's own rotation group, using established local connections and building up a new network.

Indeed, with time the rotation system develops into a small business where the leading figure would be a German–Polish connection – a woman who has a stable status as a German citizen or a long-term resident with a stable address. The business brings income not only from house rent; the contact address and the job offers too are marketable since without an address, a telephone and a 'recommendation' of a trustworthy person, it is impossible for a newcomer to get a job.

More material prosperity empowers women to abandon unsatisfactory relationships at home or to ask for more tolerant and egalitarian relationships. Being able to renegotiate the division of labour in the household is one of the achievements often mentioned by women with families in Poland. On the other hand, some families are torn apart as women establish new relationships and families in Germany, although they often continue to send money for the education of their children in Poland.

# from occasional prostitution to enforced mobility

As mentioned above, the trading and other trips may also involve occasional prostitution. Housewives, badly paid civil servants, school-girls and students resort to it in order to increase their own travel gains or the likelihood of a successful trade transaction. The majority of Russian traders in Istanbul were women. However, when a group of women were under the control of a man, this suggested the possibility of prostitution (Peraldi, 2001). Some women travelled across the border exclusively as weekend prostitutes, which enabled them to keep their jobs at home and double or triple their salaries in just one trip (Morawska, 2000). Engaging in prostitution is considered a quick way to get starting capital for a project at home (Karamustafa, 2001), or simply to make ends meet, especially among unemployed single mothers, and is a practice that has been common among Yugoslav migrant workers from the 1970s (Morokvasic, 1987).

Prostitution is more lucrative than cleaning or doing other menial jobs. It can also lead to a stable relationship with a German man and social mobility via marriage, and thus bring commuting to an end (Irek, 1998: 66–67). As long as women remain in control of their gains, women can organize their mobility according to their own needs and stop providing sexual services when they want. However, women are sometimes kidnapped and sold and can find themselves in a situation where they have to buy their freedom. They are then obliged to get the assistance of 'protectors' to avoid finding themselves in that situation again.

Trafficked women are coerced into a totally dependent status vis-a-vis the trafficker or their employer who usually confiscates their passports and their return tickets. This makes independent mobility impossible and leaves them at the mercy of a rotation scheme across European borders, being transferred from one city to another at intervals within the limits of their three-month tourist visas. The three-month limit means that women are unable to establish long-term connections with the outside world. This artificial legality is often possible thanks to complicity between modern slave traders and the border police of different countries on the trafficking route. 'The pattern in a lot of countries is that local police are involved at various levels. Sometimes they are customers, sometimes they provide protection for the clubs, sometimes they are actively involved in the trafficking operation' (Sidén, 2002).

The traffic in women and girls for the purpose of prostitution may be seen as one aspect of a transnational mobility and transfer of sex-affective labour from lowincome areas to high-income areas, to fill gaps which cannot be filled by indigenous labour (Truong, 1996). It is more profitable to deal in human beings than in drugs, arms or cigarettes, because it is not a 'one-time affair', but provides an opportunity for long-term extortion of money under pressure. 'Ukrainian and Russian women, highly prized in the sex market, earn traffickers 500–1000 dollars per woman delivered (www.iom.int).<sup>8</sup> These women can be expected to make about 215,000 dollars per month for the criminal gangs that recruit them (Sassen, 2003). Women and young girls are increasingly recruited through persons they are socialized to obey or to trust: male members of the family, friends, boyfriends.<sup>9</sup> Trafficking into prostitution and into various forms of sex-related entertainment may also rely on the system of 'mail order brides' and arranged marriages which function via internet to reach customers (although not all internet advertising ends up in prostitution) (Vartti, 2003).

While women from South East Asia and Africa have been trafficked into Europe for a long time, women from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are now the majority in this lucrative trade. In Central and Eastern European countries, proximity has lowered the costs of transport and made it easier and more profitable to traffic women from there: 'Poles are cheaper than Asians both in terms of capital investment and maintenance: what is a cheap train ticket in comparison to a 5000 Deutsch Marks air ticket from Bangkok or Manila? And, 8 IOM studies on trafficking in women. In particular: Omelaniuk Irene and Ginette Baerten 'Trafficking in Women from Central and Eastern Europe - Focus on Germany.' In Migration in Central and Eastern Europe, 1999 Review, March 1999. Geneva/ Vienna: IOM/ICMPD.

**9** Trafficking in Migrants, Bulletin no. 27 June 2003, IOM, Geneva. whereas a Thai is unprepared for cold winters — one has to buy her clothes — a Pole brings her own boots and fur coat. And she is good in bed and industrious in the kitchen (cited in Morokvasic, 1991).

The context in which women and girls are becoming more and more vulnerable to violence and exploitation has already developed an internal dynamic that will be difficult to change. Structural reforms in transition economies have made women easy targets for organized transnational networks that recruit them and assist them in their emigration.<sup>10</sup> At the same time as being an important source for capital accumulation for various smugglers and their networks, this has become a survival strategy for many households (in Albania, and Moldova, for instance).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as different forms of male mobility, as tourists, executives (which is also a source of hard currency for the countries), and in the military for peacekeeping become common, there is also an increase in the demand for sexual labour. Finally, in the context of EU enlargement and the shifting of EU borders to the east, the new member states are obliged to strictly apply the 'acquis communautaire': this has already lead to a drastic decrease of exchange and circulation with the eastern neighbours due to stricter border controls and, from 2003, implementation of visas, with an impact on tourism and the regional economy in the eastern parts of Poland and the Czech Republic. The closing of borders, jeopardizing mobility, is likely to increase the tendency toward permanent emigration among the eastern neighbours of the enlarged EU and thereby undocumented migration. It will also amplify the reliance on alternative circuits among potential migrants, so that the trafficking, which the EU is precisely trying to combat, is likely to increase.

transnational spaces of empowerment and agency vs increased dependencies

When I observed Polish migrants in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, I referred to them as transnational commuters – *pendulaires*, because of their practices of mobility transcending state borders and constructing transnational spaces (Morokvasic, 1992, 1996). It seemed that in the age of globalization and the network society (Castells, 2001), the age of migration (Castles and Miller, 1993), and the end of the bipolar world, the concept of 'transnational' was attractive and promising to capture the complexities of phenomena related to migration and to post-migration experience, including the distinctive features of transborder movements which were not adequately grasped (or were left out) by concepts such as assimilation, integration, cultural pluralism and by binaries such as departure–arrival, settlement–return and temporary–permanent. The notion of immigrant transnationalism (Faist, 2000; Vertovec and Cohen, 2000; Portes, 1996, 1999, 2001; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992, 1995) has indeed been important in challenging the classic approach to migration. While providing for the examination of the functioning and effects of social fields that span national borders, it

**10** Trafficking in Migrants, Quarterly Bulletin of IOM, Geneva, no. 19, 1999.0

11 Migrants are increasingly combining personal networks and smugglers for aranging their journey, blurring the boundary between the two channels. inspired a distancing from dualisms that have traditionally played an organizing role in research on migration. It enabled a move toward a more dynamic understanding of migration as an ongoing process.

In the same vein as, for instance, the concept of hybridity, which rests largely on dismantling the static and essentialist notions of unitary, petrified identity and culture (Anthias, 2001; Bhabha??), the transnationalist perspective seemed to challenge the static view of migration as 'a simple move between two sedentarities' (Tarrius, 1992), replacing it with definitions of migration that encompass the more fluid and complex combinations, and permits a variety of flows to coexist in different forms (Simon, 1995). For those people who are free to move and who can mobilize the social capital necessary for the moves, it is much easier today to live in two societies at the same time, maintaining two homes and commuting between them. Dual and multiple citizenships are among the visible facilitators as well as outcomes of transnational movements and transnational belonging.

Border crossing by undocumented marginal others and transnational business practices by migrant entrepreneurs are easily depicted as conscious and successful efforts by ordinary people to escape control and domination from above, by capital and state, to circumvent boundaries and obstacles of all kind. There is a tendency to conceive of immigrant transnationalism as something to celebrate, as an expression of 'a subversive resistance from below' (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). Transnationalism provides immigrants with extra 'lift' in terms of material and moral resources. Mobility, in the global world in other words, offers a superior alternative and a capability to engage in transnational practices, unavailable to those not engaged in such activities (Portes *et al.*, 1999: 230). This also meets the celebration of mobility in feminist subjectivity theory<sup>12</sup> where mobility, changing places, looking for better lives transgressing boundaries is attractive and becomes a resource. Braidotti's (1994) nomadic subjects are nomads out of choice. 'Nomadic subject' as a concept provides the infinitely fragmented subject 'woman' with an identity and implies commuting between different worlds, languages, professions, geographies, without having a fixed home or longing for one.

One could be particularly tempted to celebrate the mobility in the case of postcommunist migrants in Europe outlined above, who so skillfully adapt their habitus of the communist period to the new context, engaging in income-generating activities during their tourist travels, optimizing their capacity to face obstacles and to grasp opportunities of different systems across borders, transforming their trips into sites of opportunity and resistance. However, transnationalisms also have social costs, some of which are revealed through a close look at how women are involved in transnational practices. For instance, migrant women who become 'transnational mothers' are required to improvise new mothering and family arrangements across large distances (Shinozaki, 2003; Parenas, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). To do that they themselves have to rely on networks of family members or paid caregivers. In their migratory space transnational mothers, **12** For an excellent critique see Villa (2000).

nurses, cleaners and workers organize caring circuits managing separations across time and space. Although these practices vary from context to context (Waters, 2000; Man, 1997), they are also very different from the spatially bound households (Parenas, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997), 'which are constructed as *a norm* and which the transnational mothers contribute to perpetuate for their female employers' (Morokvasic, 2003).

Many of the East European 'live-out' cleaners, baby sitters and caretakers to whom the German middle-class, career-oriented women transfer the reproductive work that they would have done themselves, are themselves also middle class, academics or professionals in their own countries, and are trying to hold on to these high-status jobs — at home. Whereas German women, their employers, engage in career building, using their class and citizenship privilege to buy themselves out of performing reproductive tasks by employing other women to perform these tasks, the immigrant women who perform these tasks are *de-classed* (Friese, 1995). Thus, the increasing equal opportunities between German men and women in the outside world are overlapping with increasing inequalities among women. As for the gender division of labour in the household, the presence of foreign female substitutes as domestic helpers and au-pairs enables the *status quo* to be preserved and conjugal conflict to be avoided.

But, introducing non-settled, shuttle migrants into the picture enables us to appreciate other kinds of cross-border linkages and reliance on ephemeral ties, functional and efficient in terms of the objectives pursued by the people on the move. Shuttle traders and independent cleaners are in a different situation from the 'live-in' domestic helpers who often work as indentured labour and their agency extends beyond the management of the reproductive sphere 'here' and 'there.' Thus, transnational networks can be empowering, but are not always so. They can both enable resistance from below and limit it at the same time.

Transnationalization has revitalized rather than diminished one crucial function of the nation state, namely that of controlling the movement of people across its borders (Nyberg-Soerensen, 1998). The legal status and the state of origin are essential in discriminating who can and who cannot pass, who can have access to the labour market and who needs an extra work permit, and who has no other option but to work illegally. Therefore, state policies remain central to the understanding of the formation of migrants' transnational circuits and their social practices: evolving transnational relations between different social places in different countries are often shaped by the possession of a legal and stable status by those on the move. The state cannot eradicate the transnational migration phenomena, but they influence them directly and indirectly. They can make coming and going unattractive by raising taxes, transport prices, or render it more or less difficult by tightening or loosening the visa regimes. Their tolerance of informal practices, on the other hand, can be interpreted as directly supportive of transnational networks that supply informal labour markets in demand of cheap and flexible labour.  $^{13} \ \,$ 

Freedom of circulation within the EU has indeed made the borders within the EU space itself less important, but this applies to those who have citizenship, a legal status or have passports that allow them to travel freely. For others, in particular for those who remain outside the EU, the controls have been strengthened. Thus, for many people interstate boundaries are real obstacles to mobility and demand reliance on trafficking, on transnational bonds and networking — Sassen's (2003) 'alternative circuits' — which are capable of functioning undisturbed by such obstacles. The increased participation of women in certain migratory flows does not always reflect more freedom of movement, but rather a proliferation of precarious jobs where, as in the case of trafficked women, their mobility may be very restricted.

about the author

Mirjana Morokvasic, sociologist, is a research director at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris and teaches at the Université Paris X. She was Marie Jahoda professor at the Ruhr Universität Bochum in 1999–2000 and dean of the International Women's University – IFU, Hannover, Germany, 2000. In 2001, she was visiting professor at the Institute for Gender Studies, Ochanomizu University, Tokyo, in 2001, where she also made a documentary about Filipinas in Japan 'Being your own Boss'. Her research and publications (in French, English and German) focus on migration, identity processes, and gender. In 2003, she co-edited: 'Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries. Gender on the Move'. She is currently involved in several projects which explore the relationship between transnationalism, migration and gender, including a European project 'Ethnogeneration' www.ethnogeneration.org.

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