Confronting Identities by Greeks in Austria – The Challenge of “Being a Migrant”
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The simultaneous circulation of messages, media and audiences produces transnational patterns of social experience and challenges everyday concepts and identities. Analysing media practices of migrant audiences is therefore associated with the question on how people deal with internalised national borders and identities through the experience of migration.

Media and migration are seen as core elements of the metaphor of “flows” and of the “dialectic of routes and roots”. (Appadurai 1996) Media fertilize processes of identification and produce chains of variable “we” in the way Orvar Löfgren (2001) refers to as the “technologies” or “microphysics of belonging”. But concepts of belonging are strongly linked with social power and dynamics of exclusion. Despite of the microphysics of belonging, media and their audiences reproduce stereotypes in order to make foreignness distinct, involved in the processes of “othering”. Acting in-between different media landscapes offers therefore a space for renegotiating “foreignness”, “nation” and “identity”.

The focus of my research is the transnational media practices of Greeks living in Austria. Doing qualitative interviews with 18 Greeks who migrated to Austria as adults I look into the meaning and relevance of media and the social positions taken by a transnational audience. My study deals further with exclusion and inclusion both in the country of residence and the country of origin. In the case of Greek migrants in Austria the (media) distribution of xenophobic stereotypes towards “foreigners” in both countries challenges the identity of “being migrant”.

Neglecting being "µετανάστης/µετανάστρια" has less in common with the objectives of the European project (European Community) and the idea of European citizenship: the European identity is still not an issue. Important is though the distinction to the generation of Greek "gastarbeiter" and also to former concepts of diaspora (Hasiotis 1993). In order to understand the line of argumentation the paper examines on the one hand the role of media stereotypes in the confrontation with the migrant-identity. On the other hand the paper tries to interrogate the different identity strategies of Greek people in Austria and the sociopolitical dimensions of them.
Dominant frames of migration: The paradigm of “integration”

When Robert Parker (1922) published the results of his study “Immigration Press and its Control” in 1922 the core concern driving the research of the Americanization Studies had been to interrogate if European migrants would be loyal to the project called American society. Loyalty became an important topic for politics and the social sciences in USA, as an opposite to emerging national awareness about European countries of origin, since World War I (WWI) strengthened the involvement of migrants in European affairs and the ties towards countries of origins (see also Glick Schiller/Basch/Szanton 1995: 51) In this case, the media migrants used and produced were regarded as key issue for approaching the research question.

Intrinsically it is a struggle of peoples, culturally isolated, to preserve their own cultural inheritances and at the same time [...] to gain access to the cosmopolitan culture of Europe and the world. It is to state it generally, a struggle to get into the great society, to enter into and participate in the conscious life of the race. The most important instrument of this movement is the press. (Park 1922: 467)

In contemporary social research on media and migration the core question is about integration instead of loyalty. According to Heinz Bonfadelli and Andrea Piga (2005) the influence of media use on integration processes and the relationship between media use and integration is the research question which ranks highest in the field of media and migration by communication scholars. The topic of media consumption and its role for the formation of identity rates second among recent research.¹

"Integration" as a duty of migrants became a political desideratum. In the case of media studies there is a longing for inquiry on the power of media through the particular perspective of integration.² Though, from a stronger sociological point of view the exercise of political power by national governments and their insisting on the hegemonic concept of integration is the most interesting aspect on media and migration. To put it short, the idea of integrating into a "whole" and homogeneous society neglects the differentiation processes that have always been part of social life.³ Therefore, the integration discourse enables primarily political practices of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, integration became the argumentative arsenal in order to justify the social exclusion of migrants in school classes, in labour market etc.⁴

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¹ Bonfadelli/Piga (2005) refer further to two projects on the integration of media use into everyday family life and one project on the influence of culture-specific characteristics.

² Andreas Hepp describes this perspective as a longing for communicative homogeneity. This definition was presented und discussed during the Meeting of the German Communication Studies Society in Bremen (29.4.-1.5.2009)

³ In the era of globalisation theories boom such processes became even more visible in large scale. Seyla Benhabib describes globalisation in the contradictory terms of system-integration and fragmentation: „Eine weltweite Systemintegration einerseits und eine soziokulturelle, linguistische und ethnische Zersplitterung andererseits bilden die Bruchlinien, an denen sich die Widersprüche der heutigen globalen Zivilgesellschaft abzeichnen.“ (1999: 28)
The older claim for loyalty as expressed in the Americanization Studies at the first half of the 20th century is similar – regarding the consequences – with the concept of integration. In both cases at the stake is the "common social project". For the European states with a pronounced history of nationalistic movements the common social project in modernity has been delineated through the nation. The ambivalence of the "community" as the people, the citizens or an ethnic group and the transnational shift taking place is according to Étienne Balibar (2003: 9) maybe the core topic societies deal with, influencing our understanding of rights. Balibar uses the words of Hannah Arendt, the right to be

This construction [the imagination of the "people" as ethnos or as demos] resulted in the subjective interiorization of the idea of the border - the way individuals represent their place in the world to themselves (let us call it, with Hannah Arendt, their right to be in the world) by tracing in their imaginations impenetrable borders between groups to which they belong or by subjectively appropriating borders assigned to them from on high, peacefully or otherwise. That is, they develop cultural or spiritual nationalism (what is sometimes called "patriotism," the "civic religion"). (ibid.: 27f., emphasis in the original, translation from Erin M. Williams)

The exploration of the relevance of transnationalism for modern societies consists in the questioning of the fate of communities in terms of time, territories, the local and space. Therefore, social scientists started to focus on networks (Castells 1996) instead of communities based to face to face interactions. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) contend that "something like a transnational public sphere has certainly rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete.

At the same time, it has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on a appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount" (9, cf. Vertovec 1999: 3-4). But these new forms of solidarity have been accompanied by the weakening power of labour movements, the raise of individualism theories and furthermore, violent ethnic fragmentation – such as the Yugoslavian war in Europe. Based on such facts the fate of community or in other words, the common social project of nation, has become a major concern of the theoretical concepts attached to transnationalism and globalisation.

**The Transnationalism of Media**

In order to understand these processes the perspective of transnationalism has been intensely discussed over the last years. To put it with the words of Nina Glick Schiller "the study of transnational migration was an idea whose time had come" (2004: 449). Transnationalism turned aside globalisation and multiculturalism into a buzzword that appears in the focus of different disciplines, demanding closer definitions. To put it simply, the term describes "multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (Vertovec 1999: 1). In the more specific case of migration Linda Basch and Nina Glick Schiller (1995) define transmigrants

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4 Though, several meanings emanate from this broad definition. As Steven Vertovec further notes the US-Department of Defence operates also with the same notion of transnationalism – but with a different meaning – in order to indicate illegal and violent social networks of terrorists, insurgents, opposing fractions in civil wars conducting operations outside their country of origin etc.
as migrants, “whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (48). Accordingly transnationalism is the “process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders” (Basch/Glick Schiller/Blanc-Szanton 1994: 6)

In contemporary western societies experiences and fields of activity depend strong on communication processes through mass media and less in face-to-face interactions. Therefore, and keeping the definition of transmigrants above in mind, the link between media and transnationalism is central. Since Park’s estimation about the importance of the press in the social movements of migrants, the role which media play in the emerged discussions on transnationalism is still one of great significance. Paradoxically this also led to their simultaneous marginalisation. On the one hand media and new technologies like internet appear ubiquitous in papers on globalisation. On the other hand their effects in transnational processes are taken for unquestioned, driven so by technological determinism in a-theoretical marginalisation. One of the reasons for doing so is that the idea of transnationalism as a new phenomenon gave emphasis to a deterministic role of the media. But transnationalism isn’t a new phenomenon but a rather “new” theoretical concept and a new field of inquiry in order to understand interconnections across the borders of nation-states. (Glick Schiller/Basch 1995; Portes 2001) Therefore, instead of taking new media technologies as initiative craft for the emergence of transnationalism the authors insist on that media influence social fields of immigrants but they don’t produce them.

The increase in density, multiplicity, and importance of the transnational interconnections of immigrants is certainly made possible and sustained by transformations in the technologies of transportation and communication. [...] However, the tendency of today’s transmigrants to maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origin seems to be facilitated rather than produced by the possibility of technologically abridging time and space.” (Glick Schiller/Basch 1995: 51-52)

In order to overcome accusations of conceptual muddling in transnationalism-paradigm Alejandro Portes (2001) suggests a typology of actors in order to differentiate i.e. between media system and individual actors. Similar is the critique on the diverging scientific approaches on the metaphor of roots or routes. Then although the world has always been “an interconnecting realm of cross-borderer relationships” (Wimmer/Glick Schiller 2002) the present processes generate fascination within contemporary social sciences and increasing critical voices. Again, the use of “travellings” instead of “migrancies” results in the criticism of fostering social science fluidism by disregarding the different concerns of “real people” (migrants, asylum-seekers, minorities etc.): “For the rest, real people give way to flows, images and virtual connections, agency to the intersection of ‘things’ and ‘desires’.” (Favell 2001: 391) The fascination about exploring “flows” rather than people might be brought about in the context of economical globalisation: “Capitalism, they say, is everywhere breaking through the boundaries of states and localities to create a global economy and therefore a global society.” In critiquing that argument, Mann states that even economic “globalisation does not sweep away national, regional or other local differences, but it partially operates through them.”(Mann 2000, cf. Favell 2001: 391, emphasis in the original)
The role of communication technologies in flows of transnationalism has generated at least two opposite positions. A part of the debates unfolded due to the assumption that the “flows” of media threaten the bounds of communities through the import and distribution of foreign cultural patterns and ideologies, another part argues that the globalisation through media will contribute to integrating the world, to the one global society. (see again Mann 2000) Technologies like international satellite TV transmission have intensified these claims but made the output possibilities more complex: ‘The relationship between the states and transnational satellite broadcasting is also an entangled story. Transnational media, by its nature, escapes state controls and could become subversive to state powers. However, there is no such intrinsic necessity that all transborder media will become subversive to the state.’ (Çaglar 2002) And Löfgren claims after his study on the role of radio in after war Sweden and particularly by analysing the contents of weather forecast that media are a stage for the distribution of the national meaning.

Traditionally the modern mass media has been seen as a globalizing force, threatening the national project, undermining local cultures. From a historical perspective, however, the truth of the matter would seem to be the opposite. During the two past centuries the mass media have created many of the specifically national understandings around the world. They have provided the forums through which much national discourse have been pursued, and established platforms of shared experiences and routines. (Löfgren 2001)

As he introduces the ‘technologies of belonging’ Löfgren uses the metaphors of home and motel in order to describe how the notions of home and nation and further of belonging have become intertwined through the nationalization of the media. According to the conclusions, media fertilise processes of feeling ‘home’ by giving the impression that the national is the one.

In the experience of migration the loss of grounding and belonging is therefore regarded to be an option to renegotiate “foreignness”, “nation” and “identity” both for the space of origin and the space of the new settlement. The optimistic transnational view behind this expectation has though to be limited. “Routes bringing certain ideas for democratization. It’s a hope put in the migrants paths but the osmosis with new ideas is not determined by migration processes” (Çaglar 2006). Hence, the empirical approach has to be discussed since "much of the present debate deals with loss, the loss of grounding, of belonging. Identities today are described in terms of deterritorialisation and displacement. Identities no longer take place, territories are less important: Space or rather place is no longer the dimension around which we organize our lives and construct our identities.” (Löfgren 2001) What he suggests is though "to look much closer at the complex micro-physics of taking place. Although mediascapes, dreamscapes and fantasylands always are part of our physical movements in space, there is a social and cultural elaboration, a sensuous massivity and redundancy in actually being there.” (ibid.)

According to Helma Lutz (2005) the core research question in the sociology of migration asks, does migration help individuals, groups or societies to improve their economic and social situation or does it rather lead to discrimination and deterioration? Starting with this question inequality becomes the perspective that interrogates patterns of exclusion and inclusion in migration and withdraws theoretical triviality. Following this path and in account of recent results a thesis could be that
national media systems are rather unable to provide migrant audiences with the resources they regard as essential for their lives.

The need to recall core sociological concerns depends also to a general shift from structural to cultural debates in migration. Similar theoretical paradigm shifts are also well under way in communication, media, and cultural studies: “From a social problem or welfare conception of migrant to an appreciation of cultural difference, from a view of media as an imposed force to a recognition of audience activity and selectiveness, and from an essentialist or “heritage” to a more dynamic adaptive model of culture” (Sinclair/Cunningham 2000: 13) The process of changing media practices after migration is not an effect of cultural hybridity. It has to be taken into account that there are no pre-given categories but different practices (Çaglar 1997) and migrancy might rather change life style perspectives. As Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy (2001) remark “[...] media consumption is not determined ethnically but, rather, socially.” (cf. Madianou 2005: 524)

**Migrants and their “places”**

According to recent data people with migrant experience use the media in a different way as audiences who lived since in only one country. Thus, migrants tend to seek news very broadly: “By engaging in transnational practices ethnic minorities often distinguish themselves from the majority population.” (Christiansen 2004: 188) The use of media is one perspective of analysis towards understanding, how migrants construct and reconstruct their simultaneous embeddedness in different societies. Besides the dominant integration paradigm in research and society, the meaning of media practices of migrants cannot be reduced in the hegemonic discourse of getting “integrated” into one society. Since the genealogical origins of a cultural object don’t determine the meaning of it, my research is based on interrogating the relevance of media in every day concepts of migrants and the meanings of media use. In the following paper the media practices of migrants manifest the dealing with different public spheres by contradicting the Greek and Austrian media. The analysis interrogates the political dimension of involvement in different public spheres by focussing on the issue of migration. Greek migrants in Austria involve with their media practices at least between Greek and Austrian public spheres in migration discourses that conceptualize “their place in the world” by contradictory terms. As Anthias Floya points out: “Displacement has become the most powerful imagery for the modern world. Displacement already presupposes its opposite, which can be thought of as being ‘in place’.” (2006: 17) The position of “being migrant” and therefore the question about who is the “migrant” in the migration discourse is challenged.

According to David Morley (1996) new technologies influence our sense of the viable world, our “geography” changes: “Our senses of space and place are all being significantly reconfigured. [...] Patterns of movement and flows of people, culture, goods and information mean that it is now not so much physical boundaries – the geographical distances, the seas or mountain ranges – that
define a community or nation’s ‘natural limits’.” (Morley 1996: 1) Parallel to the interest in flows of capital and labour, migration research focuses in social remittances like the transfer of ideas, information and knowledge. Through the theoretical perspective of Michel Foucault, the involvement in spaces of power produces “lust” and generates knowledge, like a productive net, that covers the whole social body. (see Foucault 1978: 35). The media practices of migrants is can be described an involvement in the knowledge systems of a society and hence a struggle for empowerment. The ‘eagerness for knowledge’ (Wissbegierde) becomes in this way significant for the understanding of migrant media audiences in the sociality of the information and knowledge society.

However, “being” a migrant isn’t all about what people “are”. The homogenization through identities is an obstacle especially against practices that try to break through the restrictions of identity concepts. (Butler/Menke 1991: 36) In the case of migration, identities are a critical point since in western politic discourses the marking of ethnicities becomes crucial while class becomes unmarked. At the same moment media are concerned to be the most important social institution for the production of “otherings”. But media are simultaneously filters of “othering” and persisting producers of “we” (see Löfgren 1995). These two opposite aspects that are implicit in the role of media get further blurred according to the encoding-decoding-model of Stuart Hall (1980) of active audiences that reinterpret media messages. Taking into account the discussion on methodological transnationalism the question arises if media are an institution of naturalisation of the nation. To put it with Orvar Löfgren and in the case of audiences with migrant experiences, “before we accept the idea that mobility equals cultural and social change or new identities, we have to look much more closely at what people learn or do not learn by leaving their homes, their localities, their nations.” (1995: 14)

Seeking for a European public sphere

In the following chapters two contradictory approaches on setting meaning of media practices will be discussed. The first example, a European and therefore a rather cosmopolitan concept of “being migrant”, enables to state media practices as a praxis of empowerment. Amalia, a Greek Student in political sciences in Salzburg, identifies herself as a migrant. Although both public spheres, the

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5 However, the feeling of diminishing distances fertilized sociological thoughts long before. Such a “prophesy” dates in the time before the “globalisation paradigm” emerged in industrialised societies: “The need for a constantly changing market chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere […] the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country […] The individual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible.” (Marx/Engels 1952 [1848]: 46-47, cf. Urry 2003)

6 I regard the gender studies and in particular the feminist discourse on the category „woman” as very fruitful for interrogating several fields with concepts of homogenous groups, in that case of immigrants.

7 Media studies often focused on the mass media representation of migrants: “On the other hand, treatments of diasporic identity have concentrated on issues of representation by mainstream media of ethnic and racial identities.” (Sinclair/Cunningham 2000: 13) The not surprisingly conclusion was that “Western mass media operate as prime filters of a hegemonic discourse ‘othering’ minority cultures and identities” (ibid.).
Greek and the Austrian, are core part of her quotidian world, “Europe” is the “place” where she finds her position in order to articulate political demands. The exploration of possible media places (places in town, where Greek media are accessible) and the organisation of time for the media are strategies to structure media practices. Avoiding being “left to my fate” is a key code for Amalia, explaining the development of tactics and desires, especially regarding the media of the country of settlement.

Amalia longs for a meaning of “media equality” that globalisation and the “internet revolution” yet cannot generate. Out of the “European position” she demands public spheres with strong pluralistic and less national agendas. In the following quotation she refers to the eavesdropping of oppositional politicians through the government that has dominated in 2005 the Greek public. The media coverage has been extensive and had an effect in public debates that lasted for several months. Since then she distrusts the agenda setting of Austrian mainstream media and regards the Austria press as an insufficient source of information. Therefore, she evolves a variety of communicative strategies, seeking news very broadly. Besides the information given bei Greek media and social networks, she insists in her position as a European migrant and her right of a European public sphere.

The neglect of Austrian press to report about the affair is perceived as a conflict with the own validation on news and fosters therefore research in further media channels but produces frustration at last. The proof for the legitimation of the expectations concerning the agenda setting happens through the coverage of French media: Francophone media become relevant as they are a proof that the eavesdropping affair is a matter of European range. The question, how do people or media handle with this issue in Austria, becomes important, involves aspects of politics of recognition through media. While in the case of mainstream media the objective is to cover majority interests, the intimacy with this particular landscape lets the asymmetry of expectations and media to reflect.

Further, having interests for issues, which are excluded from the media agenda, reduces the chances of political involvement in discussions with other actors. The migration discourse and migration right are though a way to negotiate an emancipative position towards information by criticising, debating and analysing mass media contents.

8 «...πς τς μοίρας έρμαιο»
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Although Amalia is „in place” in Europe she defines herself further as a migrant. She regards the use of Austrian media parallel to the Greek ones as a premise for political participation and action. Furthermore she links the right of involvement in the public sphere with the responsibility of gathering the relevant information.

“I am not a migrant”

In contrast to the position of Amalia – as young, well-educated woman with high social capital –, “being migrant” is often a neglected identity. “Migrants” – so the quote of Timos before – is an identity concept that seems to apply for other (Serbs, Turks etc.) but not for the Greeks in Austria. While the topos of Greece as a privileged origin among others, regarding the stereotypes in the Austrian society, is a common place during the interviews, “being migrant” appears as a threatening situation. Although there is no disagree that from a technical point of view my interview partners “migrated” to Austria, the identity of migration is refused.

Lina, who lives since 1979 in Austria, lives with her three children and husband in Vienna. Her husband is also Greek and instead of him, who finished his studies and works in a prestigious job for an international organization, she stopped her studies and took care of the family. Together with her family she tried to return to Greece some years ago, but the minor job perspectives in Greece have been the reason for the decision to stay in Austria.

Lina describes herself as a very politically interested person. She subscribes to a Greek link-wing newspaper since many years and is highly committed in using media and being informed about what happens in Greece and Austria. Speaking about her involvement in watching and reading Greek media Lina neglects that nostalgia could be the reason of it. Similarly she refuses being a “μετανάστρια” or of having anything in common with former models of Greek migrants. Not being a “gastarbeiterin” is a very important issue. Like Timos she identifies and homogenizes other ethnic groups of migrants, but negates that she could also be one.

1: Πως νομίζεις ότι αναφέρετε σε σενά ότι ο τρόπος που είναι η δημοσιογραφία πάνω στη μετανάστευση. Νομίζεις ότι είναι κάτι που αναφέρεται σε σένα προσωπικά;
Asking about her place in-between the migration discourses, Lina prefers to refer to contents of the Greek media instead of criticizing Austrian discourses. Although and because of her interest in media Lina has a high insight into the distribution of racist knowledge (Wissen) through media in both countries. In this sense she is also aware of the integration imperative toward migrants and responds to it – not without being ironic about it – for example by adding Austrian habits to the Greek ones. Lina knows that even if she neglects a migrant-identity her social performance responds to a spectrum of “places” that are structural possible: in the Austrian public sphere she is regarded as a migrant and political discourses refer to her in that manner. But the racist outlines of the public sphere toward migrants make such an identification threatening; hence her concept of creative deformation of structures is based on the neglection of the subject of migration.

Conclusions

In my analysis I tried to contrast to different approaches towards media and migrant identity. The concept of transnationalism enables the simultaneous consideration of public spheres and their intwoven character in order to formulate social positions. Conserning the communicative value of public spheres (Arendt 1981) the core question is – to put it with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2008) – “Can the subaltern speak?” The place of “being migrant” makes people often and for different reasons speechless. Empacipative concepts arising from the idea of European Union are still not relevant for migrancies which are not connected to a cosmopolitan view.

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9 Lina discusses in the interview the topos of gratitude: „Austria gives us the bread we eat“ Therefore it is not possible for her to criticize Austrian media contents.
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