

Vienna meets the Balkans: Communicative practices and commodification of culture in the city's migrant economy



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Funded by
Jubiläumsfonds der

Stadt  Wien

16.11.2021



Background

- Project funded by *the Jubiläumsfonds der Stadt Wien für die WU*
 - **Vienna meets the Balkans:** Communicative practices and commodification of culture in the city's migrant economy (2021-2023)
- PhD project by Lejla Atagan, M.A. at WU Vienna (business communication/ applied linguistics)
 - An ethnographic approach to communication in migrant businesses in Vienna: The role of language, culture and communication in businesses owned by migrants from the Balkans (2020 – ongoing)
- Pilot project (WU-funded)
 - **Communicative practices in Vienna's business hotspots run by Slavic-speaking migrants** (2020)
- Project team: Nadine Thielemann, Lejla Atagan, Dina Stanković

Structure

- **Introduction** – multicultural neighbourhoods and the impact of migrant business
 - research questions
- **State of the art** - multidisciplinary research perspectives on the migrant economy
- **Project outline** - data & methods
 - outlook & first observations
- **Outlook** - implications for practice

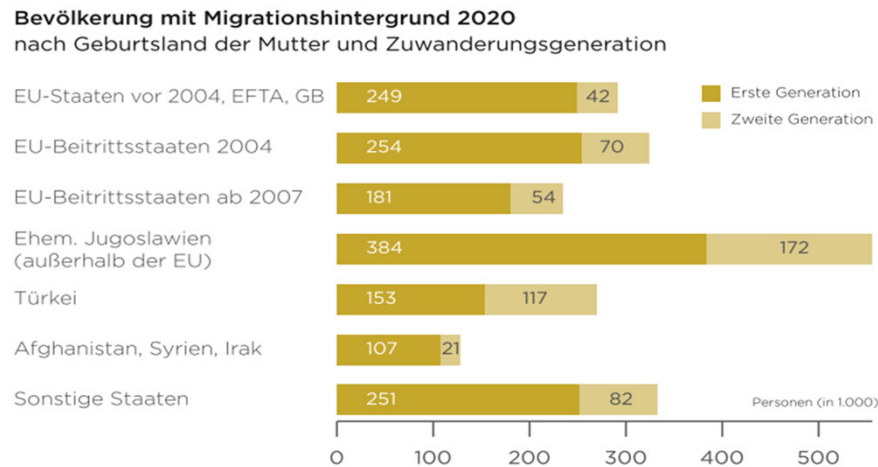
Introduction



Migrant businesses and the urban space

Vienna & the Balkans

- Long history of cultural links between Austria and the Balkans
- Vienna has a well-established community of migrants from the region
 - Migrants from the Balkans are the largest group of migrants in Vienna



Q: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Mikrozensus-Arbeitskräfteerhebung, Jahresdurchschnitt über alle Wochen. - Bevölkerung in Privathaushalten.

Statistik Austria
 (2021): Migration und
 Integration. Zahlen,
 Daten, Indikatoren

Multicultural neighbourhoods



- popular hot spots with migrant businesses in the 10th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 20th districts of Vienna (Enzenhofer et al. 2007, Schmatz/Wetzel 2014), e.g.
 - Ottakringer Straße and Märzstraße also known as “Balkanmeile”

Commodification of language and culture

Commodification

- transforming something (e.g., a language or linguistic variety, a culturally coined dish or element of decoration etc.) into a product or service for commercial purposes

(Bubinas 2003; Heller 2010; Leeman/Moodan 2010, Liebscher/Dailey O`Cain 2017, Flubacher 2020)

Commodification of language and culture



Research questions

- How do migrant entrepreneurs mobilise their cultural capital and linguistic heritage in order to achieve business success?
- How do migrant businesses shape the neighbourhoods and communities in which they operate, creating sites of international encounter and enhancing urban development?

Researching the migrant economy – state of the art



Multidisciplinary perspectives

Social & economic science

- *ethnic entrepreneurship* (Enzenhofer et al. 2007) – first-generation migrant entrepreneurs with difficulties accessing labour market
 - poor knowledge of the host country's language
 - lack of professional training/qualifications or lack of recognition of their qualifications
 - self-employment as a chance of social mobility and advancement
- *global entrepreneurs* (Enzenhofer et al. 2007)
 - well-qualified individuals
 - deliberate choice of migration & self-employment in pursuit of a transnational career

Social & economic science

Broad concept of *migrant entrepreneurship*

“Immigrant entrepreneurship is defined as the process whereby immigrants identify, create and exploit economic opportunities to start new ventures in their destination nations.”

Dheer, R.J.S. Entrepreneurship by immigrants: a review of existing literature and directions for future research. *Int Entrep Manag J* **14**, 555–614 (2018), 558.

Social & urban geography

- migrants' economy and its impact on urban development
- migrant businesses in areas with weak demand for living or commercial units facilitate the upgrading & improvement of living conditions (*urban scaling*) (e.g., Schmatz/Wetzel 2014, Glick Schiller/Caglar 2013, Aigner 2019)
- creating sites of multicultural encounter between migrants and members of the host society (Glick Schiller/Caglar 2009, 2013)

Linguistics & cultural studies

- Investigations of multilingualism, and communicative and cultural diversity in the urban space, e.g.
 - TLANG project on several British cities
 - LIMA-project on Hamburg
 - Leeman/Modan (2010) on China Town in Washington DC
 - MIME-project (WP Frontiers of Multilingualism)
 - ...
- focus on ethnic shops & market stalls (e.g., Blackledge et al. 2015, Blackledge/Creese 2019) or other ethnic businesses (e.g., Flubacher 2020, Bubinas 2013)

Linguistics & cultural studies

- **use and distribution of languages** in multilingual urban spaces (e.g., Scarvaglieri et al. 2013, King/Carson (eds.) 2016)
- **spatial turn** – *sociolinguistic spaces* (e.g., Liebscher/Dailey-O`Cain 2017), *third space* (Bhabha 1994) and *translanguaging space* (e.g., Zhua/Wei/Lyons 2017)
- tracing visually displayed multilingualism in the urban space, e.g. **linguistic landscaping** study of the Ruhr-metropolis region (Mühlan-Meyer/Lützenkirchen 2017) or **sound-scaping** (e.g., Scarvaglieri et al. 2013, Carson 2016)
- studies assessing migrants` capacity to **commodify** their **heritage language and/or culture** (e.g. Duchene et al. (eds.) 2013, Flubacher et al. (eds.) 2018, Goncales/Kelly-Holmes 2020, Liebscher/Dailey-O`Cain 2017)

Project focus

- analyse the **communicative practices** emerging among small Viennese businesses in the leisure & hospitality and gastronomy sector run by migrants` of Balkan origin
 - How do they shape the way in which such businesses operate?
- assess the **role of their heritage culture & linguistic identity** and their contribution to the emergence of multicultural urban spaces in Vienna

Data & Methods



Project outline

Interviews

- stakeholders' (entrepreneurs, clients etc.) concepts of linguistic & cultural heritage mobilized in migrant businesses
- semi-structured interviews

Interaction

- *in situ* applied communicative practices in service encounters & team meetings in migrants' businesses
- recordings of service encounters

Semiotic landscapes

- what is presented to passers-by and amounts to the multicultural character of the neighbourhood
- linguistic/semiotic landscaping of relevant hot spots

Interviews (ongoing)

- So far 13 interviews with migrant entrepreneurs conducted by Lejla Atagan
- Analytical frameworks: Grounded Theory, narrative analysis, membership categorization analysis
- Research focus
 - conceptualization of their roles (e.g., as entrepreneur, employer, migrant promoter of cultural heritage)
 - ethno-concepts of integration and social and cultural categories relevant for identity construction

Interview corpus (*to be enlarged*)

	Code	Age	Gender	Business	Origin	Cause of migration	Year of migration	District
1.	GC	50	M	Sales /Distribution Cafés	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Economic reasons	1990	16.
2.	PW	48 and 38	M	Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	war and studies	1992 & 2009/10	15.
3.	MAR	mid-60s	M	Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	war	1993	12.
4.	SAR	32	M	Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	war	1994	4.
5.	HI	32	M	Café/Sports bar	Bosnia and Herzegovina	studies	2012	16.
6.	MB	53	W	Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	War/ Studies	1992	20.
7.	AB	mid-40s	M	Restaurant	Croatia	war	1992	5.

Interview corpus (*to be enlarged*)

	Code	Age	Gender	Business	Origin	Cause of migration	Year of migration	District
8.	GFB	38	M	Sales/Snack Bar	Croatia	Personal & economic reasons	2018	7.
9.	SGV	39	W	Restaurant/Fast Food	Serbia	Economic reasons	1989	7.
10.	SOF	32	M	Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	War	1992 (GER) 1998 (AUT)	15.
11.	ARO	40-45	M	Bakery	Kosovo	Economic reasons	2017	5.
12.	COR	60	M	Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Economic reasons	1981 (GER) 2019 (AUT)	15.
13.	TES	34	M	Café/Restaurant	Bosnia and Herzegovina	war	1992	15.

Heritage culture

- Ambivalent stance – pride & shame
- Promoter of their heritage culture
 - successful commodification of culinary culture
- Construction of a Yugoslavian identity
 - occasionally in the context of a global concept of hospitality, e.g. „Everybody is welcome, Chinese people, too“ (Hir)

Example of ambivalent stance

- Entrepreneurs have classified their restaurants into those to be ashamed of and those to be proud of
 - If you can bring Austrians to the restaurant, it is representative and the goods are of good quality (pride)
 - If you cannot invite Austrians to the restaurant, it is unprofessional because of bad quality and service or because only Bosnians go there and Austrians do not feel welcome (shame).
- This perception is tied to the prevailing media discourses in both Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- The Balkans as primitive, backward, brash, rude vs. the enlightened and progressive Western Europe.
- Due to the wars in former Yugoslavia, this image of the Balkans was adopted in the media discourse in most of the successor states (Šarić 2004; see Vezovnik & Šarić 2015).

Migration & being a migrant in AT

- challenging concept, identity struggles
- Distancing themselves from the term 'migrant'.
- The term *migrant* evokes negative associations
- Picture of migrants → *"somehow it's always a synonym for something, some people who, carry bags, they are going to steal, rape, maybe something like that."*
- Synonymous use of the terms **migrant** and **refugee** influenced by "master narratives" (Bamberg 1997), especially in the Balkans but also in Austria

Entrepreneurship as a story of success

- Narratives are characterized by particular master plots (Tobias 1993)

Sacrifice:

- Sacrificing your own dreams for the family business
- One has to sacrifice a lot (*selbstständig*= *selbst*+*ständig*)

Transformation:

- Rejection of Austrian culture at the beginning, now Austria is their home

Quest:

- Hope for a better life through independence, security, more freedom

Underdog:

- From a refugee child who lived in a brothel to a successful entrepreneur
- From a youngster without perspectives from the "Sarajevo ghetto" to a successful entrepreneur
- From a young refugee to an entrepreneur in a foreign country

Interaction (*to do*)

- communicative practices in which linguistic and cultural heritage is mobilised in service encounters
- based on participant observation
 - ‚teaching‘ sequences – clients learning how to properly pronounce food items in BCMS
 - introducing culinary culture – sharing recipes with clients, explaining how a dish is prepared
 - greeting sequences including BCMS
 - ...

Interaction (*to do*)

- Data: video recordings of service encounters and team meetings – currently working on getting access to the field
- Analytical framework: (multimodal) interaction
- Research focus
 - reconstruction of relevant practices (e.g., welcoming customers, ordering & serving, characterising culturally coined food items)
 - management of multilingualism on the micro-level (translanguaging, code-switching/- mixing)

Semiotic landscapes (*ongoing*)

- pilot phase (2020) linguistic landscaping in Vienna's hot spots of Slavic-speaking migrant communities (*SlaVienna*)
 - using the App LINGSCAPE (<<https://lingscape.uni.lu/>>)
 - data base of almost 500 items of public signage
- enabled identification of hot spots of the Balkan community
 - Märzstraße 15.
 - Klosterneuburger Straße 20.
 - Ottakringer Straße 16.
- participant observation and semiotic landscaping at the selected hot spots (*planned*)

Linguistic landscaping – preliminary observations

discourse	artistic	commercial	expressive	informatory	political	regulatory	subcultural
	28	348	13	135	13	5	104

language	BKMS	English	German	Russian	Arabic	Turkish	other
	253	62	299	32	34	50	54

monolingual units	mixed units	language-neutral units
206	255	25

Focus on signs with **recruitment function** (Blommaert 2013) - **173**

- inviting particular groups of people into interaction with their producers
- shop signs, event-related signs
- point to the targeted audience

Targeting the Balkan community



SA NAMA CETE USPETI
Albert MARKOVIC
 Mi Nudimo obsirniju savet u oplasti

Penzije
 Tujde nege
 Savet o prezaduzenju

Naplate od osiguranja
 Starateljstvo
 Vize

Prevod ex YU

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 90 WIEN

LUKIĆ
mesara

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ZLATNI PEK 2,50

JAFFA-NAPOLITANKE CREME
 JAFFA-NAPOL-JAGODA 1,20
 JAFFA-NAPOL-CAPUCINO 1,20

MEĐENO SRCE 2,70
 CHIPSY 2,30
 SMOKI 1,90
 PRIMA-STAPICI 1,20

NEGR0 1,20
 WAFEL Roll 1,30

Balkan NADA Market

SARMAKRAUT
 Balkan Market

Balkan Market
KAO KOD KUĆE

commercial events & entertainment
- targeting the Balkan community



Gastronomy sector

predominant use of BCMS, occasionally including *partial* or *complementary* translations (Reh 2009)

Targeting the Balkan community



Hinting at the community



naming relies on
wordplay, only accessible
to members of the
community (speakers of
BCMS)



targeting the Balkan community & members of the host society

- multilingual signs
- *overlapping (to duplicating) translation* (Reh 2009)





BCMS to German

Selling Balkan dishes to the host society

duplicating (Reh 2009), i.e. translating Balkan dishes to a German-speaking customer



Explaining Balkan dishes to customers from the host society



German to BCMS



explicit marketing as ethnic cuisine, e.g. Etno Zlatibor Grill / Restaurant, Etno Restaurant Konak

naming strategies combining BCMS elements and German or English elements e.g., blends such as Pitawerk and Mek Burek, Mek Leskovac create a ,cool' image - strategy of superdiversity



Targeting clients from the host society



Implications for practice

- foregrounding resources rather than deficits with regard to migrants
- adopting migrants' perspective (e.g., interviews) and actual communicative practices (e.g., analysis of service encounters & team meetings) enables to properly assess challenges & contributions
 - improving existent support and funding schemes, or other instruments that target migrants and enhance their local business engagement in Vienna
 - re-evaluating migrants' cultural heritage and their contribution to urban scaling, e.g. by reframing particular districts in Vienna's city marketing

Thank you for your attention!

Project website

<https://www.wu.ac.at/slavisch/research/current-projects/https-wwwwuacat-slavisch-research-current-projects-vienna-meets-the-balkans>

Project team

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