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Marija Jurić Pahor

Diaspora and Diasporisation: Slovene National Identity in the Contemporary Globalised World

After a brief presentation of the history of the concept of diaspora and its derivatives, and a critical review of the relevant literature, the article explores the phenomenon of diasporic Sloveneness, with a particular focus on the contemporary Slovenian diaspora. The concept encompasses, but is not limited to, Slovenes and members of Slovene national communities (with an emphasis on Carinthian and Trieste Slovenes) who have dispersed around the world since Slovenia's independence in 1991. The author concludes that the contemporary Slovene diaspora consists mainly of young, highly educated people who are actively striving to establish themselves in the global world. Even though they have emigrated from their country of origin, they remain - especially through modern communication technologies - connected to it. The article provides an insight into the complex and multifaceted process of diasporic grouping and long-distance nationalism, which also includes processes of transculturation and sheds light on Slovene national identity in the contemporary globalised world.

Keywords: diaspora, contemporary Slovene diaspora, national identity, nationalism at a distance, transculturation.

Diaspora in diasporizacija: slovenska narodna identiteta v sodobnem globaliziranem svetu

Po kratki predstavitvi zgodovine pojma diaspora in njenih izpeljank ter kritičnem pregledu zadevne literature se prispevek osredotoča na pojav diasporičnega slovenstva s posebnim ozirom na sodobno slovensko diasporo. Pojem zajema, vendar ne izključno, Slovenke in Slovence ter pripadnike slovenskih narodnih skupnosti (s poudarkom na koroških in tržaških Slovencih), ki so se po osamosvojitvi Slovenije leta 1991 razkropili po svetu. Avtorica ugotavlja, da sodobno slovensko diasporo tvorijo zlasti mladi, visoko izobraženi ljudje, ki si aktivno prizadevajo za uveljavitev v globalnem svetu. Čeprav so se izselili iz izvorne domovine, ostajajo – zlasti prek sodobnih komunikacijskih tehnologij – z njo tudi povezani. Razprava omogoča vpogled v razvejan in kompleksen proces diasporičnega skupinjenja in nacionalizma na daljavo, ki vključuje tudi procese transkulturacije, in osvetlitev slovenske narodne identitete v sodobnem globaliziranem svetu.

Ključne besede: *diaspora, sodobna slovenska diaspora, narodna identiteta, nacionalizem na daljavo, transkulturacija.*

Correspondence address: Marija Jurić Pahor, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, Erjavčeva 26, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija, e-mail: juric.pahor@alice.it.

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1. Introduction

The concept of diaspora is derived from the ancient Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the prefix *dia* (through) and means "dispersion", "scattering" (Cohen 2008, xiv; Vertovec 2009, 129). For a long time, the term was mainly associated with the history of Jewish communities living outside the Land of Israel and displaced around the world. In Judaism, the diaspora is connoted with the expulsion of Jews from the mythologically significant Promised Land. The term diaspora stands for a special case of migration and living abroad. Before the 1990s, the paradigmatic example of diaspora was the Jews, along with the Armenians and the Greeks, but the term has since come to be applied to a wide spectrum of populations opened up by forced as well as voluntary mass migrations (even if the latter involve a certain degree of choice or coercion): exiles, refugees, immigrants, ethnic and religious minorities, asylum-seekers, etc. The semantic range of the concept of diaspora has also increased with the broadening of the spectrum of groups. It is no longer limited to the negative experience of involuntary existence abroad, exile or banishment; it also brings to the fore the positive connotations of diaspora-related dynamics. Khachig Tölölyan, publisher of the *Diaspora* journal, founded in 1991, describes contemporary diasporas as "exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (Tölölyan 1991, 5), as a kind of counterweight to the nation-state, which has been transformed, but not annihilated, by the processes of globalisation, since it remains, in his view, a privileged form of politics. In this way, Tölölyan is addressing perhaps the most important implication of the current debate on the term diaspora: the possibility of gaining insight into global phenomena in society, culture and literature that are divorced from modern national categorisations, yet are nevertheless co-determined by the thinking models developed to describe nations or nation-states.

Just like nations, diasporas can be understood as "imagined communities" (Anderson 2007). Although it often seems that nations have become the only way of imagining communities, this is not the case. In fact, according to Anderson (2007, 23), imagined communities are all communities that transcend direct face-to-face contact. The nation is neither the first nor the last socially dominant form of imagined community in history, but it has evolved from earlier forms and will transform into new ones. The notion of a contemporary diaspora is situated in a tension between global mobility and nationalism, which is no longer defined territorially. Zlatko Skrbiš (1999; 2003, 11) speaks of long-distance nationalism, stressing that the ambitions associated with it "have not had an exclusive domicile in homelands for quite some time". The implied tension is also suggested – and this paper will elaborate on this – by the term "contemporary Slovene diaspora", which is used to "denote Slovenes" who "dispersed around the world" after the creation of the state of Slovenia in 1991 (Lapuh 2011, 71), and can also be extended to include members of Slovene ethnic communities who emigrated

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from Slovenia's neighbouring countries (with focus specifically on the case of Slovenes in the Province of Trieste/Italy and Carinthia/Austria). Špela Grašič (2014) also defines as a diasporic community the segment of the population in Ljubljana's Fužine district described by Goran Vojnović in his novel *Čefurji raus!* (2008), which consists mainly of immigrants from the former Yugoslav republics. Although in the classic sense the word diaspora describes a specific community, terms describing diaspora as a state (*diasporicity* or *diasporism*), a process (*diasporisation, de-diasporisation, re-diasporisation*), and in adjectival form also as an orientation or modality (*diasporic identity*, *diasporic nationalism, diasporic existence*, etc.) also exist (cf. Brubaker 2010, 294).

2. Diaspora: A Critical Definition of the Concept

The starting point for much of the debate on the current use of the term diaspora is William Safran's *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return* (1991, 83–84). Diasporas, according to Safran, are communities that

> (1) have been dispersed from one centre of origin to at least two peripheral or foreign regions; (2) retain a memory, vision or myth of their original homeland; (3) believe that they are not or cannot be fully accepted in the host society; (4) regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and a place to which they wish or would wish to return; (5) strive to preserve or restore this homeland; and (6) their group consciousness is significantly defined by their ongoing and continuous relationships with their environment of origin.

More recent definitions of diaspora stress that diaspora is not necessarily marked by the criterion of forced emigration, as implied by Safran's definition, but can also be caused by voluntary decisions, often motivated by economic reasons (Carmen 2018). James Clifford (1997a, 285–287), with a view of the African diaspora as portrayed by Paul Gilroy in his book *Black Atlantic*, points out that Safran's register of definitions is inadequate, especially as far as the question of "roots" and the tendency to return to the original homeland are concerned. Diasporic communities, he argues, cannot be reduced to a "single centre of origin", nor to a "racial", ethnic or national essence that is immutable, since they suggest the multiplicity of their geographical areas of origin and, consequently, of their histories, and, in the case of Africans, of a kind of shared and persistent cultural "sensibility" linked to the colonial history of slavery and eradication. This "sensibility" is as important in the formation of diasporic communities as the projection of a specific origin.

It should be stressed that this is not a real origin, but a projection of origin or imaginary, which, in terms of iteration,[1] is inscribed in history and geography, linking the displaced culture to the original homeland, a space that is no longer held by the diaspora member, and which is most often tied to a specific land or

territory. It is precisely this process of integration that produces hybridity, as it is created through the collection, juxtaposition, and appropriation of different components along this path that defines diaspora. "I feel Argentinean because I was born here, but I have Slovene blood running through my veins … but I am drawn to the first Prekmurje", a 60-year-old descendant of immigrants from Prekmurje between the wars told the researcher who interviewed her (Molek 2019, 114). It is in this context that one can also see observations that members of (especially contemporary) diasporas are often bilingual or multilingual, moving between different cultures and establishing or maintaining a home in two (or more) countries or homelands. They also form networks of relationships with individuals and diverse groups in the country of reception as well as in the country of origin and elsewhere in the world (e.g., Repič 2006; Lapuh 2011; Molek 2019).

Stuart Hall (1990, 226–227) asked, with regard to the identity of the "new ethnicities" (African and Indian Caribbeans in Britain): If identity does not proceed in a straight, unbroken line, from some fixed origin, how can its formation be understood? He answers: "We might think of Black Caribbean identities as 'framed' by two simultaneous axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture." The first one, according to Hall, gives members of the diaspora some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds them that what they share is the experience of a profound discontinuity.

This duality is also characteristic of the identity of the large groups of migrants who have been emigrating from the Slovene ethnic territory since the mid-19th century. It is estimated that by the First World War, some 280,000 people had emigrated from this territory. According to the 1910 American census, 183,331 people spoke Slovene as their mother tongue. Ten years later, the number had risen to 208,552 (Drnovšek 2013, 74). The most common historical causes of mass emigration and migration have been the collapse of empires, the emergence of new states, nationalisms and processes of national homogenisation, political terror and wars, and, often linked to these causes, the desire for a better life. During the two world wars, fascism and the economic crisis in Venezia Giulia in particular triggered a massive diasporisation of Slovenes. Around 100,000 people emigrated from this region; 70,000 of them to Yugoslavia, and the rest to South America (especially Argentina and Brazil), France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Egypt (Vovko 1992, 91; Kalc 1992). Even in the period after the Second World War, Slovenes emigrated in large numbers for political and economic reasons. Andrej Vovko (1992, 91) has experienced the simultaneous similarity and continuity, and the profound discontinuity of which Hall speaks (cf. preceding paragraph): "We are scattered into the wide world, / our trace / is a hot tear and pain, / which forges it hard in consciousness / and crushes us to the ground: / Forced beggars!".

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According to Hall, diasporic identity, or the identity of "new ethnicities" as a form of collective identification, is never uniform, but always implies a rupture, which is most generally characterised by the forced or voluntary displacement of people from the territory they have held and (at least partly) still hold as their own, to new geographical areas. It is also fragmented and variously constructed from the collisions, contacts and intersections of diverse cultural practices, discourses, and experiences. This is also true of the "contemporary Slovene diaspora", a term used to designate Slovenes, and more specifically Slovene citizens who, following the process of Slovenia's independence in 1991, "dispersed around the world" (Lapuh 2011, 71). Friš and Hazemali (2021, 267) state that between 1991 and 2019, 281,111 statistically registered inhabitants left Slovenia, of whom almost 58%, or 162,329, were foreign nationals, and 42%, or 105,8574, were Slovene citizens. At the time of Slovenia's independence, residents from the former Yugoslavia living in Slovenia also became "foreign citizens". According to Friš and Hazemali (2021, 270), Slovenes and their descendants are now located all over the world, with the largest number in the USA (between 200,000 and 300,000), followed by Germany (50,000), Canada (40,000), Argentina (30,000), Australia (20,000 to 25,000), France (20,000), Switzerland (15,000), Serbia (10,000), Sweden (5,000 to 7,000), and other countries, especially in Europe.

3. Slovene Independence and the Effects of Slovenia's Accession to the EU

Slovenia's independence marked the first major turning point in the migration dynamics associated with the country. Internal immigrants and members of nationalities from various republics of the former Yugoslavia living in Slovenia became, virtually overnight, "(external) immigrants/immigrants, citizens of foreign countries" (Lukšič Hacin 2018, 65) and/or members of nationalities with a "country of origin" abroad. Špela Grašič (2014), as mentioned above, defines those living in Ljubljana's Fužine, in reference to Vojnović's novel *Čefurji raus!,* as a "diasporic community"; similarly, Špela Kalčić and Jure Gombač (2011) define the immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina living in Slovenia as a "Bosnian diaspora". The label *Čefur*[2] suggests a rejection of immigration from other Yugoslav republics by the Slovene majority population. In 1990, the percentage of those who agreed with the statement that immigrants "endangered Slovenes" was as high as 53% (Komac 2007, 49–50). Current surveys show that this percentage has increased considerably in relation to the perception of "cultural endangerment" (Medvešek et al. 2022, 102–103). The perception of "cultural endangerment" has increased considerably (Medvešek et al. 2022, 102–103), while the percentage of those who agreed with the statement "immigrants endanger Slovenes" has also increased. Vera Kržišnik-Bukić (2014b, 137) points out that after Slovenia's independence, the government not only tried to

stop the trend of members of the ABČHMS[3] acquiring citizenship, but also to "get rid of these people altogether". This is evidenced by the case of the "erased", who were illegally removed from the permanent population register of Slovenia by the Ministry of the Interior on 26 February 1992, an act that had serious consequences for those affected and was soon recognised as "silent" or "administrative ethnic cleansing" (Dedić et al. 2003, 45). The European Court of Human Rights found in 2012 that Slovenia had violated the rights of the erased. Thirty years had to pass before the "erased" received a public apology from the state (Mirovni inštitut 2022).

In the pre- and post-independence period, Slovenia operated as a "nationalising state" (Brubaker 1996), which, in its eagerness to build a "complete" or "realised" nation-state, sought to assimilate or otherwise subjugate, in particular, those national communities that remained unrecognised or relegated to a secondary role in the process of nation-building. Conversely, Slovenia's independence, and in particular its accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 and to the Schengen area in 2007, have had a significant impact on the situation of Slovene minorities in Slovenia's neighbouring countries. The borders became increasingly porous until they were abolished and became merely administrative. Even upon Slovenia's accession to the EU, there was talk of the notion of *zamejstvo* (borderlands) losing its meaning: Slovenes here and beyond the border became citizens of the European Union (Rudl 2009, 48). This began a process of accelerating cross-border contact between Slovenes, which was and is particularly evident in Austrian Carinthia, where the total number of Slovene EU citizens in the cities of Klagenfurt/Celovec and Villach/Beljak increased from 700 to 2,800 between 2008 and 2021, and in 36 rural municipalities (with a Slovene-speaking population of between 5 % and 30 % or more) from 500 to 2,100 (OGM 2022, 17). The finding that children of immigrant Slovene citizens make up a significant proportion of those enrolled in bilingual primary schools (which is also true for children from ethnically mixed and German-speaking families, see OGM 2022, 31–33) and that as many as one-quarter of those who have immigrated say that they take part in Slovene social and cultural life allows us to conclude that the Slovene in Carinthia today is in a situation which Brigitte Busch (2022, 58), referring to the Austrian OGM opinion poll, describes as a "situation of resistance or revitalisation". Refugees and migrants who settled in the bilingual territory of Carinthia during or after the Yugoslav War also contribute to the revitalisation of the Slovene language (Obid 2017, 133). Among them is Amina Majetić, a graduate of the Federal Gymnasium for Slovenes in Klagenfurt, who was born in Jesenice in 1991 and whose parents were originally from Bosnia. She is a teacher of Slovene and German, a poet, and a musician. In December 2021 she took over leadership of the Slovene Writers' Association in Austria. She represents Slovenia and/or Austria at music festivals all over Europe (Locutio 2023).

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The data on the immigration of Slovene citizens to Carinthia cannot obscure the fact that between 1996 and 2016, 100,000 people left the country, 60 % of them under the age of 26 (Addendum 2018; see also Aigner & Klinglmaier 2015; Obid 2017, 134). The OGM study (2022, 57) for the last 20 years further concludes that "[b]oth the more 'Slovene' a place was in 2001, the more its population declined". The majority of Carinthia's inhabitants moved to Vienna or Graz. Experts, including Carinthian Slovenes, speak of a "brain drain" (Obid 2017, 132–138; Addendum 2018), of a "growing 'diaspora' in Vienna and Graz" (OGM 2022, 14) and also of "a fairly large Carinthian-Slovene 'diaspora', especially in Vienna and Graz" (Obid 2020, 43; see also OGM 2022, 16). Marija Wakounig (2021, 216), a native Carinthian Slovene and university professor at the University of Vienna, explicitly links the notion of "brain drain" to the (Carinthian-Slovene) "intellectual and economic diaspora". She herself belongs to the Slovene-speaking educated elite who – like Martin Kušej, Tanja Prušnik or Andrej Leben – "make a decisive contribution to the cultural and intellectual dynamics and to the awareness that Austria is a multilingual country" (Busch 2022, 58). Busch remarks: "Those who leave the traditional settlement area are not automatically 'lost' for the national community". The history of national movements shows that "the diaspora can significantly influence the development of 'home' with important impulses" (Obid 2020, 44). For Elena Messner, who was born in 1983 in Klagenfurt and has lived in Vienna for many years, Carinthia remains "a kind of zone of academic and literary contacts and in this sense a productive intellectual space" (Praster 2022). The question of whether the "diaspora of Carinthian Slovenes" is "a loss or a gain for the national community" was also discussed at the three-day conference titled *The Future of Carinthian Slovenes –100 years after the Carinthian plebiscite*, organised by the Hermagoras Society (Mohorjeva družba) in Klagenfurt/Celovec, in July 2020 (Mohorjeva 2020) under the banner of *CarinthiJa*. Many members of the Carinthian-Slovene diaspora are also closely connected with colleagues and institutions in Slovenia (and elsewhere in the world).

Emmerich Kelih (2022, 274) estimates that there are currently about 5,000 Slovenes living in Vienna, of whom 3,530 are native Slovenes. He also notes that after the economic crisis of 2008, there has also been a "brain drain" from Slovenia and an influx into academic professions in Vienna. Among them is Mihaela Pavličev, a native of Ptuj and professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Vienna, where she also obtained her PhD and subsequently worked at the universities of St. Louis, Oslo, and Cincinnati. In 2019, she returned to Vienna and, for the 2022–2024 term, became a member of the leadership of the SMUL World Network, which was founded in 2015 and brings together Slovene scientists, professors and renowned personalities working in academia and research around the world, primarily associated with the University of Ljubljana (SMUL 2023). For many years, a "post-Yugoslav diaspora" has also been active in Vienna,

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working to create a counter-narrative to the hegemonic, nationalised and ethnicised narratives of the post-Yugoslav states (Živadinović 2022).

It is noteworthy that, as in the case of Carinthia, the majority of emigrants from the Republic of Slovenia since 1990 have been young and highly educated Slovene citizens (Lapuh 2011) and, more broadly, young people from Slovenia (irrespective of citizenship)[4] (Naterer et al. 2019). Young people from Slovenia emigrate mainly to Austria and Germany (Gostič 2019, 225), but also to the USA, Switzerland and the UK (Naterer et al. 2019, 39). In this case, too, there is a "brain drain". Marina Lukšič Hacin (2020) links this concept to the integration of highly skilled and qualified human resources into broader global dynamics and more developed fields.

Although the number of Slovenes in the Province of Trieste fell by 58% between 1910 and 2015, the primary reason for this decline being the mass emigration before and after the Second World War (Bufon 2021; see also Dolhar 2021, 2), it is striking that more tangible data on the "brain drain" from the Province of Trieste over the last three decades are not (yet) available. This is despite the knowledge that – as Milan Bufon points out in his interview with Poljanka Dolhar (Dolhar 2021, 3) – this is a pressing problem, which "concerns above all the most vital, younger part of the population, especially the highly educated population, who have found employment and with it a new living environment elsewhere in Italy, Slovenia, and especially in more developed European countries". Zaira Vidau (2017, 90–91) mentions the USA and Australia as places of emigration for young Slovenes from the Province of Trieste (and more broadly from Friuli Venezia Giulia), referring to interviews with "young emigrants around the world" regularly published by *Primorski dnevnik* over a long period of time. The longitudinally based PoMATURI project launched by the Slovene Research Institute in Trieste (Bogatec 2019; 2020a) will provide welcome data. According to Zaira Vidau, the phenomenon of "brain drain" in Slovenia in particular is widespread, as young people who complete their university education in Slovenia also find employment and set up a new home there (Brezigar & Vidau 2021, 99). The loss of the young or younger generation, according to Bufon (see Dolhar 2021, 3), "in the foreseeable future will be felt in the context of our minority community and in the short term will lead to a decline in the number of children with a Slovene language of instruction" – a fact that is also confirmed by empirical data (Bogatec 2020b). Nevertheless, there is also a process of revitalisation of the Slovene language among Slovenes in the Province of Trieste, facilitated by the immigration of a particularly young and younger urban Italian population into the Trieste countryside. This is evidenced by the significantly increased enrolment of children from mixed and non-Slovene marriages in schools with Slovene as the language of instruction (Bogatec 2020b). Italian immigrants in the Province of Trieste "are no longer just 'foreigners' but an integral part of the local society, especially when they learn

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the Slovene language and join associations" (Bufon 2020, 165). The phenomenon promises a revival of Slovene and Slovene-ness in the rural areas of Trieste, but it is also supported by studies showing that the identities of young Slovenes in the Province of Trieste – and more broadly in Friuli Venezia Giulia, but also in Carinthia – are becoming increasingly complex and cannot (any longer) be reduced to a stereotypical us-and-them divide. Heterogeneous identities and multifaceted feelings of belonging are coming to the fore (see Vavti 2012; Pertot & Kosic 2014; Vidau 2018; Obid 2018).

4. Diasporic Nationalism: SLO Global

Global mobility is a key concept in contemporary social-theoretical debates, conceptually and metaphorically characterising the nature of modern societies. Increasing mobility, in conjunction with modern information and communication technologies, enables the emergence of a "transnational everyday reality" (Nedelcu 2012, 8), based on the ubiquity, simultaneity and immediacy of interactions across borders. In this way, individuals who are physically distant from their original homeland nevertheless remain connected to it, as technology enables them to maintain long-distance interpersonal contact, to be socially and emotionally supported, to follow cultural traditions, and to feel a sense of familiarity across the globe. It also gives them the opportunity to create and sustain diasporic communities. There are more diasporas in the world today than ever before, and there is an increasing amount of "brain circulation" (which contributes to reducing the negative effects of "brain drain") and diaspora networks (Cohen 2008). Thus, contemporary diasporic subjects often appear as prototypical cosmopolitans: mobile, flexible, open to new contacts and to maintaining old ones, capable of shaping knowledge that responds to global challenges, without being constrained by national or local influences and allegiances. Although social carceralisms such as nationality and ethnicity are often only perceived from the perspective of global mobility, in the sense of transcending state/national borders and constraints, in this kind of understanding of diasporic communities it is worth noting that diasporic communities are not "emblems of transnationalism" (Tölölyan 1991, 6) *per se*, nor can they be reduced to the function of subverting the norms of the nation-state and defined "as ways of sustaining connections with more than one place while practising non-absolutist forms of citizenship" (Clifford 1997b, 9). What is meant is a citizenship that is no longer confined to territorialised notions, but is created through a movement in space and time that combines both "roots and routes". According to Zlatko Skrbiš (1999), at least one other, very important dimension caused by the increasingly dynamic global migratory movements should be taken into account, namely the preservation and sharpening of national ties at the transnational level, i.e., diasporic nationalism or long-distance nationalism.

Diasporic nationalism, also known as "long-distance nationalism" according to Benedict Anderson (1992), defines a set of ideas and practices of belonging that link people living in different geographical locations to a particular territory that they perceive as their ancestral homeland (Glick Schiller 2005). Although closely related to classic notions of nationalism and the nation-state, the notion is characterised by its transcendence of narrow territorial frameworks, referring to "the simple fact that nationalist ambitions have long had no exclusive domicile in homelands" (Skrbiš 2003, 11). Or, as Arjun Appadurai (1993, 798) writes: "The genie of nation-state, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial-state, is now itself diasporic."

The issue of diasporic Sloveneness came to the fore in the second half of the 1980s, when the diaspora became an important factor in the process of the recognition of Slovenia as an independent and autonomous state. Slovene immigrant communities, which had previously had almost no formal contact with Slovenia, became – especially in 1991 – "influential political actors" (Skrbiš 2003, 12; Klemenčič 1999; 2002; Žigon 2002; Kristen 2007a; Valentinčič 2018). Darko Friš and David Hazemali (2021, 267) note:

> [W]hen 'things got serious', [Slovenes around the world and their descendants] played a key role first in the independence and then in the international recognition of the young Slovene state. Like their compatriots from abroad,[5] they took to the streets, united in NGOs, associations and federations, but also individually, and demonstrated in front of key institutions of the countries in which they lived. They wrote thousands of letters of support for the Republic of Slovenia, addressed to important diplomats and other political leaders […]. As Helena Jaklitsch, Minister for Slovenes Abroad and Internationally, wrote in January [2021]: '[…] they were our best diplomacy, the best we could have wished for'.

Despite their political differentiation, Slovenes around the world at that time were able to insist on common denominators and "kept the continuity of the state-building idea", recalled Lojze Peterle, President of the first Slovene democratic government, at the round table of their traditional gathering in Ljubljana on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Slovenia's independence (MMC RTVSLO 2016). Dual citizenship, as Nadia Molek (2019, 158–161) and Jaka Repič (2006, 166–168) illustrate in the case of Argentina, has proven to be crucial in the relationship with the Republic of Slovenia and is seen as an incentive to spread a sense of belonging to the Slovene community. Slovenes in Argentina legitimised their origins by acquiring Slovene citizenship, many of them began to visit Slovenia regularly after independence, and around 200 of them moved to or returned to Slovenia after 1991. Many people spoke of travel, cultural and academic exchanges between the two countries, as well as financial support from the Slovene state to Slovene community institutions.[6] A significant number of Slovenes who did not intend to move to Slovenia also sought to

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acquire Slovene citizenship in order to confirm their "identity with a document". Molek (2019, 159) argues that this was a recurrent perception of the social meaning of citizenship, also characteristic of the Slovene migrant communities outside of Argentina's Entre Ríos that she studied. In this way, citizenship was turned into "a tool that gives legitimacy to Slovene citizenship". Seyla Benhabib's (2010, 171) observation that there is a growing number of individuals in the world who wish to maintain dual citizenship or to live for a longer period of time in a country without renouncing their nationality of origin is significant. Unlike Argentina, or Mexico and the Dominican Republic, the United States "has remained impervious to many calls to allow dual nationality," which, according to Benhabib, "makes a mockery of the complex interdependence of human lives across borders and territories".

Slovenia has also shown its reluctance towards dual citizenship in the post-independence period (Kejžar 2007, 171–175). The current law – the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia, adopted in 2007 – also implies a strong stereotype of the homogeneity of the Slovene nation and the linking of loyalty to the state with loyalty to the nation. This is also suggested by the status that Barbara Kejžar (2007, 176–177) describes as "an incomplete form of dual citizenship" or, in reference to Felicita Medved, "quasi-citizenship", which is linked to the category of Slovenes outside the borders of Slovenia. This status "equates Slovenes worldwide and abroad with Slovene citizens in certain areas and grants them certain citizenship rights despite the fact that these individuals do not have Slovene citizenship". However, as Kejžar (2007, 177) points out, such generosity is not to be found in the case of immigrants of non-Slovene origin. On the contrary, Slovenia has, as he points out in reference to an analysis by Marc Morjé Howard, one of the most restrictive policies for granting citizenship to these immigrants, alongside Lithuania.

National identity (tied to one's own existing or potential nation-state) still seems to be the primary identity of the human being in Slovenia, but also in Europe or the West, and this identity is being strengthened in connection with neoliberal discourse (Jurić Pahor 2020a, 563–565). Zlatko Skrbiš (1999, 183) is convinced that long-distance nationalism (diasporic nationalism) will also gain more and more significance in the future. The large proportion of particularly young and often highly educated Slovene citizens (half of them employed, 36 % students) who emigrated from Slovenia in the post-independence period "represents not only a wave of new Slovene emigration, but also a new Slovene diaspora" (Lapuh 2011, 84). The empirical survey (N = 650) shows that the intensity of their "sense of Slovene belonging […] is strong, which means that they express and feel belonging to the Slovene nation" (Lapuh 2011, 85–86). Bevc and Ogorevc (2014, 19) also found a strong attachment "to their home/Slovene environment" in their study on the potential and actual emigration of young people (former Slovene Erasmus students) from Slovenia for the period

2005–2010. Attachment to this environment is also the biggest obstacle to their emigration.[7] Today's times are permeated with reflections and imaginings that imply an emotionally marked investment in a national imaginary of belonging (Zadel 2020, 118–119). Among others, it is shaped by the national brand "I **feel** S**LOVE**NIA", which is supposed to ensure the successful positioning and marketing of Slovenia on a global level. Individuals should (re)live Slovenia, feel its "heartbeat," embrace it as their own and strengthen it – "at home" and/or "anywhere in the world" (Jurić Pahor 2020a, 565).

SLO Global, which was established in 2020, is called "an online business network platform to promote, connect and inform the Slovene business diaspora and Expats," and it aims to achieve this goal. Its main purpose is to "encourage business cooperation and exchange of business opportunities between Slovenes around the world. SLO Global is part of the Slovenian Global Business Network which was founded by Dr Štefan Bogdan Barenboim Šalej (São Paolo, Brazil & Ljubljana, Slovenia), [...] together with Dr Peter Kraljič, Director of Emeritus of McKinsey & Co. (Düsseldorf, Germany & Kolomban, Slovenia) and Ambassador Aljaž Gosnar [...] (Ljubljana, Slovenia)" (SLO Global 2023 – About Us tab; SSK 2021). SLO Global operates from Brazil and makes it clear that diasporas are becoming "a legitimate source of political power that transcends the borders of states and nations, while at the same time having a decisive impact on them" (Skrbiš 2003, 11). It is no coincidence that the theme of the second annual virtual conference in December 2021 was *From Minorities to Majorities*. The participants, over 100 of them, from 26 countries on four continents, were introduced by the Minister for Slovenes Abroad and Internationally, Helena Jaklitsch, who highlighted the great progress towards more active networking of successful Slovene businesspeople at home and abroad and said:

> If two years ago we were still thinking of three separate Slovenias [kin-state, abroad and emigration], also in the field of economy, which only casually meet, the time of the pandemic, also with the strong and bold support of the Slovene Business Global Alliance, has shown that in this connection lies immeasurable power. (Urad 2021)

The current Minister and State Secretary for Slovenes Abroad, Matej Arčon and Vesna Humar, are also associated with SLO Global (SLO Global 2023 – Events tab), as well as several diplomatic missions and consulates of the Republic of Slovenia around the world (SLO Global 2023 – Business Directory tab), in the knowledge that economic substance is of paramount importance for the preservation of Slovene identity.

Like any nationalism, long distance nationalism – or even "digital nationalism" (see Bajt 2014) – implies an effort to keep the foreign, the other, the different at an appropriately safety distance. These efforts, which go hand in hand with the decision to disable the need to communicate, cooperate and coordinate

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with the national/ethnic other – the different, can also be interpreted, at least in part, as a consequence of ontological insecurity based on the new fragility of social bonds, which the time of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated in Slovenia as well. Such desires, even in an era of transnational connections and interdependence, especially when they merge with emergency situations, can converge, coalesce and concentrate in policies that give thought to the ideology of the modern nation-state, symbolised and realised by the border. Of course, it is not (or at least not only) a geopolitical border, but an imaginary border created by nationalism. Nationalist discourse divides the world into "us" and "them"; it erects borders between one and the other. The "border syndrome" becomes even more pronounced and reveals its productive power especially against refugees, migrants and populations/minorities along the border (see Jurić Pahor 2020b). "Border policies" have become a fundamental instrument of state policies, and it is worth bearing in mind that borders are becoming increasingly flexible and multiplying, which is already evidenced by the fact that the contemporary configuration of the global space can simply no longer be considered the sum of disconnected territories (Mezzarda & Neilson 2018), as also suggested by the SLO Global activity. Alongside the proliferation of borders, researchers also perceive a marked rise in nationalist economic protectionism, which gives rise to new forms of domination and exploitation, and a rise in racism, Islamophobia and miscephobia. In recent decades, and especially in the last few years, migration policies and public debates in several of the European countries studied, including Slovenia, have significantly shifted away from the earlier proclamation of more liberal and democratic values (Jalušič & Bajt 2020).

The notion of diaspora, which began to gain momentum in the 1990s and experienced a veritable conjuncture at the beginning of the 21st century, is also a sign of a shift away from more liberal (or liberalist) values and has continued to this day. The question arises: why have terms such as *exile, immigrant, refugee, expatriate* and, in Slovenia, the terms *zdomec* and *izseljenec, diasporan* and *expatriate* (diasporans, wishing to return, have maintained permanent residence in their home country, while expatriates have not; see Urad 2022a), which have been in use for a long time, suddenly proved to be inadequate? Monika Fludernik (2003, xxii, xvi) perceives in this development a shift from an individualist to a communitarian perspective, which began to take hold in the USA, then spread worldwide, and defines identity politics: "The current scenario of diasporic communities privileges communal collective rights over individual rights, the collective self over the private self." It is no coincidence that in Slovenia, "the single term Slovenes around the world, or with the foreign word diaspora, is most frequently used in recent times to refer to returnees and emigrants and their descendants" (Urad 2022a). The term "Carinthian-Slovene diaspora" in Vienna and Graz, discussed in Chapter 3, also entered scholarly language in 2020. It corresponds to the definition given by the Dictionary of the Slovene Standard

Language (Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika 2, 2014): a diaspora is "a national or religious community living scattered in the territory of another nationality or religion".

Although Zlatko Skrbiš (2003, 9) argued twenty years ago that with the completion of Slovenia's independence process, the Slovene diaspora "exhausted its active role and became a passive subject of political discourses, used mainly to legitimise the nationalist ideal of Slovene nationhood", this has not been the case, at least in the last few years. On the contrary, both Slovene emigrants in the diaspora and Slovenes living in the border areas of Slovenia's neighbouring countries are actively involved in the scientific, educational, economic and cultural development of the Republic of Slovenia. They are perceived as a highly qualified potential that should be used for the benefit of the state and "Sloveneness". In this sense, the Slovene diaspora is also no longer seen as a welcome actor, first in the process of independence and then in the international recognition of the young Slovene state, or as someone who follows in the footsteps of their ancestors and does not forget their roots, but in the event of assimilation or forgetting them, can "rediscover" and "embrace" them (Valentinčič 2016). The Slovene state is also increasingly recognising and acknowledging it as part of a dynamic process that is actively seeking to assert itself in a global world where the capitalist world economy and the market play a decisive role. Of course, it is also, and above all, concerned with the realisation of its own national policy and related economic interests.

Although it is difficult to deny the political and rhetorical utility of calls for the "unity of Slovene space" – and in particular for the "unity of Slovene cultural space" as envisaged in the Resolution on the National Programme for Culture for the period 2022–2029, adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia at the end of February 2022, with the (co)efforts of the Minister for Slovenes Abroad, Helena Jaklitsch (Resolucija o nacionalnem programu za kulturo 2022–2029, 2022; Urad 2022b) – it is important to stress that it is politically conjunctural. It corresponds to the nationalising self-image of Slovenes, which, among other things, assumes that "Slovenes abroad" (i.e., Slovenes in neighbouring countries and Slovenes abroad) will transnationally connect, integrate into the Slovene national community and (co-)contribute to the greater visibility of the Republic of Slovenia in the international environment (Urad 2022b). This vision is also state-centric, as it does not take into account that "Slovenes abroad" may be identified with countries such as Austria, Italy, Croatia, Argentina, Australia, etc., in addition to the Republic of Slovenia. Štefka Vavti (2012), who conducted an in-depth qualitative study on the identifications of young Carinthian Slovenes who were living in Carinthia at the time of her study, or who were studying in one of the major Austrian educational centres, illustrates that the patterns of national identification, in addition to young Carinthian Slovenes, who identify themselves entirely as belonging to a national community (their national identi-

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fication is often local), include those who come from mixed marriages, live in a peripheral or German-speaking environment, have breaks in their biographies, and are not involved in Slovene organisations and societies. Given their daily exposure to differences, they inevitably develop transcultural, hybrid or mixed belongings. People who have Slovene (in any form) in their repertoire constitute a very heterogeneous group that can no longer be understood as a unified linguistic or cultural community (Busch 2022, 60), as research on the linguistic habitus of bilingual youth also points out (Zorčič 2019). This community also includes those for whom Slovene – because it has not been passed down from the previous generation – is a lost or repressed family language. The loss of a language due to its prohibition and forced or violent assimilation (especially during fascism and Nazism) is considered by researchers to be a traumatic event (Paternu 2005; Busch 2022, 60). Such loss is often experienced as a void in the third generation, causing a desire to re-appropriate the language. Studies show that language revitalisation can contribute to the healing process at both the individual and societal level (Busch 2022, 60).

5. Diasporic and National Identities: Between "Roots and Routes"

Countries' migration policies continue to have a strong impact on international migration movements, and moreover, the issue of migration policies has become one of the key social issues of the 21st century (Učakar 2018). The word immigration itself usually appears in policy documents with the words crime, struggle, control, borders, implying the danger of immigrants for the majority society. Moreover, immigrants are perceived as culturally different (Učakar 2018, 14), which is also true for members of minorities living along borders, especially when they are suspected of being bi-national, transcultural and in relation to refugees or migrants (Jurić Pahor 2020b, 72–73). This is also suggested by the dominant national Slovene discourse, which denies the category of hybrid, mixed or even repressed identities as if these do not exist (Sedmak 2020), considers it inauthentic, immoral, and even traitorous (Pušnik 2011, 158), or is too quick to associate it with loss of identity and assimilation. Regardless, this discourse will make it increasingly difficult to deny the "heterogeneity that more than anything else characterises diasporic Slovene identity" (Skrbiš 2003, 9).

Diaspora is most often characterised in academic literature as an ethnic community, and what structures it often remains unaddressed, or is guided by an internal, inherent logic in the sense of a pure, monolinear national unit. Members often articulate their belonging to the diasporic community through discourses of shared "roots and routes" (Georgiou 2006, 5; see also Golob 2010), which means that they do not consider it as something that emerges *ex nihilo*, but as some-thing that is connected to the original "kin-state/home" and/or "home", while being

shaped and transformed through a continuous and often highly branched and complex process of grouping and being on the move. This includes the seemingly "anational conception of homeland", which Kovačič (2021, 108–109) discusses in the case of 40 younger interviewees who emigrated from Slovenia during the economic crisis of 2008–2015. His research showed that a world with more promising career opportunities opened up to them abroad, even though the original home enviroment remained important to them. The interviewees did not associate this space with the country of Slovenia or with the aspiration to return to it, but with their original micro-environment, which they experienced as a kind of familiarity or domesticity. The fact that this space was accessible and real for them abroad, including the Slovene language, was confirmed by the fact that only 17.5% of the interviewees stated that they missed the Slovene language, "as it can be used on a daily basis in videoconference communication with relatives and by reading various content online, and many of the younger ones live abroad with a partner or roommates from Slovenia" (Kovačič 2021, 120).

The specific patterns of articulation of groupings and identities in the diaspora (and beyond) must always be seen against the background of a particular historical moment, the subjective experiences and cultural background of expatriates. These are also determined by the current cultural contacts that migrants increasingly cultivate across national borders, thanks to the sophistication of digital technology. These articulations are manifested in the coexistence of different, even contradictory, cultural codes and value systems, which, precisely because of their synergistic and/or conflicting nature, can never become definitively defined or permanently established. Cultural (or even ethnic) demarcation, in the sense of diasporic communities or identities being trapped in rigid binarisms of the we/you type, is alien to this kind of coexistence. No one lives his or her life only in the shelter of a single identification, without contact with the Other. In this sense, this coexistence also contradicts the theories of the "melting pot" or assimilation, which at one time or another have been very present in contemporary ethnic studies or diaspora studies. Skrbiš (2003, 16, 17) writes that "assimilation processes" in Slovene diasporic communities around the world "have done their work" and emphasises that "decline, not growth, is what characterises Slovene communities around the world." In the context of the contemporary Slovene diaspora, Friš and Hazemali (2021, 270) argue that "the rapid assimilation into a new environment tends to accelerate assimilation". Marija Wakounig (2021, 216) makes a similar observation in the case of the Carinthian Slovene "intellectual and economic diaspora". She argues that while the latter contributes to raising awareness of the problems of the Carinthian minority in Austria and beyond, it accelerates the assimilation and national marginalisation of Slovenes living in Carinthia.

Irena Šumi (2000, 132) characterises this kind of view of "Sloveneness" as an assumption that implies a compulsion according to which the subject must

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constantly behave in accordance with their origins, that they must renew their presumed originality: "the Slovene minority […] is both 'objectively' 'Slovene' and 'is becoming' Slovene (or as such is 'disappearing', 'assimilating')". Assumptions that understand Slovene ethnicity essentially as a "pseudo-exclusivist" category, as something rooted in the past and constructed around the notion of Slovene ethnicity, do not help to understand diasporic or ethnic processes and identities. According to Irena Šumi (2000, 133), the main reason for the "structural paralysis" and "analytical impotence" of research dealing with the topic of Slovene ethnicity also lies within the belief that every subject and every phenomenon constantly behaves in accordance with its origin, that it must constantly renew its originality. Assimilation and the decline of the Slovene population and the associated fear of "disappearance" seem inevitable, especially in the face of the challenges of contemporary globalised society. Dejan Valentinčič (2021, 75–78) defends this dictum with the example of the Slovene community in the USA. He argues that the first generation of Slovene emigrants, who arrived in the USA between 1870 and 1924, still had such conditions of grouping (settling in agglomerations close to factories, their own infrastructure, e.g., shops, taverns, bakeries, churches, doctors, lawyers, their own newspapers, their own societies, etc.) that enabled it to affirm its original Slovene identity and culture, but that "by the end of the 1940s, its life force was already failing"; only the arrival of post-war political and then economic migration "reinvigorated" the community.

Theories posit national or ethnic assimilation as a linear process by which one group (usually non-dominant or minority) becomes culturally similar to another (usually dominant or majority) over time, until it "merges" with it. In contemporary societies, Valentinčič (2019, 14, 16) argues, they are associated with the notion of "endangered Sloveneness" and the related notion of "threatened Sloveneness" and are closely linked to broader social changes, which sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has captured with the "fluid society" metaphor. According to Valentinčič (2019, 16), these changes are now so rapid and powerful that it would be more appropriate to speak of a "gaseous society": "Everything is mixing, everything is changing, nothing has a fixed form anymore, and contemporary types of migration are an integral part of this. In many places it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain and develop." Milan Bufon (2020, 21) also perceives similar processes in the case of the Province of Trieste. He says that this once entirely Slovene rural suburb now appears as a "hybrid or 'fluid' social space", and no longer as "an area with certain uniform and distinctive characteristics". A similar dictum pervades his book on Slovenes in Trieste – the city where the largest urban Slovene community once lived. The book also shows that interest in the Slovene language is once again growing in Trieste (Bufon 2023). Here, the already written-off utopia of the revival of the Slovene language and Slovene identity returns to the scene once more, in the form of a new hope, which only develops its real effect in historical retrospect – radically

transformed, above all in terms of its social nature. This is not, or is not only partly, a nostalgic aspiration to restore the former, supposedly better state of affairs, but rather an open-ended process characterised by uncertainties and the articulation of the partly still unknown, the new.

We should take into account the increased mobility of people and abandon the idea that language and territory are statically linked. In a rapidly changing world, such ideas are inadequate or insufficiently relevant, if only because more and more young people are living outside their traditional areas of settlement. Lives, as Tim Ingold would say, are "no longer lived within places, but through, around, in and out of them, and simultaneously from and to other places" (cited in Gregorič Bon 2013, 81). Identities are correspondingly complex. Individuals may express multiple identities depending on the context of interactions that transcend national borders and are located in more than one place. Accordingly, there are "switching identities", negotiations with identities or intermediate positions. Stuart Hall speaks, in reference to Marie Louise Pratt, of "contact zones" and Fernando Ortiz, respectively, of "primal scenes of transculturation," which, according to Hall (2017, 161), are not to be seen outside of the Euro-imperial expansion and, in the contemporary era in particular, of the new multicultural and global cities; there are complex relations of asymmetrical exchanges, regulated contact and enforced exclusion among different cultures, which have nevertheless irrevocably transformed the identity of everyone involved. Under the conditions of transculturation (for more on the notion, see Jurić Pahor 2012; 2017), such transformation therefore never takes place in equal but always in unequal conditions, articulated in structures of hierarchisation and subordination. Nevertheless, these "contact zones" have also always been the site of cultural hybridisations, creolisations and syncretisms – in short, scenes of diaspora formation where different cultures not only intersect but are also obliged to change themselves in the face of each other. In such a situation, difference is neither rejected nor fixed or consolidated, but continuously translated or (re) negotiated (Hall 2017, 165–166; Hall 2016). This process also allows for a more inclusive approach to addressing identities and spaces of the common than essentialist or totalizing, unifying models assume. It is based on the assumption that the idea of the common cannot be rooted but only produced in dialogue with the other, the foreign, the different, taking into account also and especially the position of identities and people in their historical context and in the texture of current social relations.

6. Conclusion

Stuart Hall (1996) symptomatically addressed his famous debate in the form of the question *Who Needs Identity*? He pointed out that late modernity coincides with a time of loss of identity stability, which signals that the time has come for

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new identities to emerge. Modern identities are subject to constant change and transformation and often coincide with a sense of unhomeliness in which the existential modus of being-in-the-world as *Un-zuhause-sein* (Eng. not-being-at-home) is expressed (cf. Heidegger 1997, 261). This is also suggested by the notions of diaspora and diasporisation, which, such is the central premise of the paper, are situated in the tension field between global mobility and nationalism. Although this nationalism is no longer defined territorially, since it has a transnational and transterritorial character, it allows – also through new communication technologies – the creation and/or finding of an imaginary nation, identity or home, and, in the face of being thrown out of the familiar social environment, also a relatively solid vision of the future. The phenomenon was exemplified by the case of the contemporary Slovene diaspora, which in the narrow sense of the word refers to the group of Slovenes who dispersed around the world after the constitution of the state of Slovenia in 1991, and in a broader sense also to emigrants – members of Slovene national communities outside Slovenia or outside the traditional territories of settlement of Slovene national communities (the focus was on the case of the Slovenes from Carinthia, Austria and the Province of Trieste, Italy). It was found that the contemporary Slovene diaspora is closely linked to (e)migration, especially of young and highly educated people ("brain drain"). It is part of a dynamic process that is actively seeking to establish itself in the global world, where the capitalist world economy and the market play a decisive role. Several indications, e.g., the SLO Global online business network, support the assumption that it is at least partly linked to diverse actors in the homeland of origin, which is attributable in particular to the policy of promoting "brain circulation", which has been pursued over the last few years, in particular by the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenes in Neighbouring Countries and Slovenes Abroad. The contemporary Slovene diaspora is being shaped and transformed through a continuous and often very complex process of grouping and being on the move. It also prompts processes of transculturation that undermine traditional values and beliefs about unique, homogeneous, and bounded national and ethnic identities and foreground the circumstances of mixing people, cultures, languages, shifting borders, confrontations, and clashes. Identities are becoming increasingly multi-faceted, diasporic and hybrid, and are always constituted in relation to the other and the otherness, and based on what Stuart Hall calls constitutive outside. Diasporisation or hybridization, as Ernesto Laclau (2007, 65) argues "[…] does not necessarily mean decline through the loss of identity: it can also mean empowering existing identities through the opening of new possibilities. Only a conservative identity, closed on itself, could experience hybridization as a loss".

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Notes

[1] Jacques Derrida (1999) introduced the notion of iteration into the philosophy of language. Iteration denotes the repetition of a concept in philosophical and social discourse. According to Derrida, in the process of iterating a concept (or notion), the same meaning is never reproduced as in the first, original use of the concept. Each iteration transforms the meaning, adds something to it or even takes something away from it. There is no "original" source of meaning or "original" in this sense, just as there are no rigid and unique definitions.

[2] According to the *Dictionary of the Slovene Standard Language* (Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika 2, 2014), the word *Čefur* 1. pejoratively denotes "a member of any nation of the former Yugoslavia other than Slovenes living in Slovenia", 2. "a member of a subcultural group with a distinctive language that is a mixture of Slovene and other nations of the former Yugoslavia".

[3] ABČHMS is the designation for members of the Albanian, Bosniak, Montenegrin, Croat, Macedonian and Serb national communities.

[4] For example, in 2003, according to the population register, there were 47,000 foreign citizens in Slovenia, i.e., 2.3% of the population. Most of them came from the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, followed by those from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Macedonia (Bevc et al. 2004, 33).

[5] On the efforts for Slovene independence among the Slovenes of the Porabian region, see Munda Hirnök (2007), among the Slovenes of Carinthia, see Klemenčič (2008), among the Slovenes of Italy, see Kristen (2007b) and Devetak (2021).

[6] The aspirations for cultural and academic exchange and financial assistance are taken into account and set out in the Resolution on the Relations with Slovenes Abroad adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia in 2002 (Resolucija o odnosih s Slovenci po svetu 2002).

[7] In contrast, Gorazd Kovačič (2021, 121, 119–120), using the example of 40 young and younger interviewees who emigrated from Slovenia after the economic crisis of 2008–2015, concludes that "belonging to Slovenia as a cultural and national space can be detected in only less than one-fifth of the interviewees." When asked what they miss from their homeland or home environment in their new surroundings, however, "92.5% of them answered that they miss their former friends and family members, 57.5% miss the Slovene landscape, food and social climate (the way people communicate, mentality, etc.) […]", which relativises the above finding and rather confirms the phenomenon defined by Billig (1995) as "banal nationalism". This nationalism is embedded in everyday life. It operates especially subliminally (below the threshold of consciousness) and likes to express itself in an emphasis on the "domestic, our" as distinct from the "non-domestic, foreign". In Slovenia, for example, alongside nature and landscapes, it also likes to be tied to culinary symbols (e.g., Mlekuž 2020).

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