

T

owards Understanding of  
Contemporary Migration

*Causes, Consequences,  
Policies, Reflections*

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## 2.2. Who Has Left, and Who Would Return: Differences between Serbian Highly Educated Emigrants in the USA and Canada

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### Introduction

A powerful wave of technological development in the mid-1980s, and particularly in the last decade of the twentieth century, affected the developed countries of the world, the so-called North. It consequently led to major changes in their labour markets, primarily related to the increasing mobility of the workforce and a strong growth in demand for skilled and educated workers. Knowledge-based economies, where 'human capital' was the primary resource were rapidly developing. Therefore, it is not surprising that there was a strong competition among developed countries to attract highly skilled migrants.

At the same time, in the early 1990s Serbia was in deep political and economic crisis, with the sense of loss of prospects for a huge part of the population, especially for the young people. This had a significant impact on the intensification of emigration from our country, and the 1990s, after the second half of the 1960s, were the period of the most intense emigration from Serbia (Penev & Predojević-Despić, 2012), which also led to the complexity of reasons crucial for making decisions on emigration.

The level of education has a significant role not only in making decisions about emigration and the choice of country of immigration, but also regarding the level of integration in the new environment, and the possibilities of reaction to unfavourable conditions in the labour market. The highly educated (owing to the human and social capital and the possibility for good adjustment to living and working conditions in the new environment) react to these changes quickly and easily. They are significantly more mobile than less educated workforce, which often results in their more pronounced emigration, as well as more frequent migration within the receiving country, going into another country, temporary or permanent return to the country of origin (Poot et al., 2009).

Researching migration determinants has long been focused on the macro aspect, i.e. the impact of structural factors on labour migration, including the highly educated and professionals. However, these approaches have failed to provide satisfactory results in the understanding of the main triggers for migration. In this regard, attention should be focused on the experiences of skilled migrants and professionals, i.e. the view of the very participants in migration. In this way it is possible to gain a better understanding of determinants that influenced the decision to migrate and the choice of destination country (Ozcurumez & Aker, 2016; Geis et al., 2013; Favel et al., 2006). It is also important to investigate further into micro-forces of adaptation to the new environment, which are inherently subjective (Povrzanovic-Frykman et. al., 2016), but are nonetheless important in terms of understanding further migration intentions and movements.

Therefore, the aim of this Chapter is to point to the similarities and differences in the analysed receiving countries between highly educated immigrants who had acquired high/higher education in Serbia and emigrated in 1991 or later. The analysis is based on the data of a large-scale survey conducted by the author of this Chapter among respondents living in the United States and Canada. Besides analysing the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the focus of this Chapter is on differences in views about the reasons for emigration, as well as the plans to return at the time of emigration and at the time of the survey.

The main reason for selecting the US and Canada as the receiving countries is that during the 1990s they had relatively simple and fast

procedures for granting immigrant visas for citizens of Serbia, i.e. FR of Yugoslavia, which a significant number of our citizens used after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia (Despić, 2015). At the time of numerous restrictions in the EU, it was one of the main motives for a considerable number of our citizens to decide for these two countries when making decisions about the country of destination. These are also the countries with two different types of immigration policies, which are considered as the essential factor of the decision to migrate (Geis et al., 2013). Therefore, the aim of the Chapter is to, from the perspective of the survey-participants, provide a better understanding of differences in motives for choosing the country of destination among the highly educated migrants who emigrated from Serbia during the same period.

## Theoretical Considerations

A significant shortcoming of the existing studies on migratory movements is that the causes of migration and their impact on the wider social context have been mainly researched separately (de Haas, 2008). This is one of the key problems, because the migration should not be perceived as a phenomenon different and separate from the broader social relationships and processes. Development and migration are considered two parts of the same process, and being in constant interaction they should be perceived as such (de Haas, 2014; Castles, 2008). Moreover, the comprehension of the complex relationship between the structure and agency is one of the most important research questions concerning international migration, to which an adequate explanation has failed to be provided for decades (de Haas, 2014), although the agency of migrants (and non-migrants) continues to play a central role both in the development of social theory on migration and in shaping the policy responses to migration (Bakewell, 2010; Faist, 2000).

The push-pull theory on international migration is one of the first micro-theoretical models that place the agency at the centre of research and highlights the role of the individual, assessing the positive or the negative sides of moving from one location to another. This theoretical framework assumed that different demographic, eco-

nomic, environmental and other factors had a crucial impact on the decision to migrate. Critics of the push-pull standpoint believe that its analytical applicability is in question, saying it is more of a descriptive model that arbitrarily lists various factors with a certain role in making migration decisions. The set of usually arbitrarily selected migration determinants mostly has a two-valued character. The push and pull factors are reflected in each other, representing two sides of one coin: only together they enable the distinction between 'here' and 'there' and do not take into account the possibility of selection of migration participants (de Haas, 2008). This conceptually reduces people to objects that lack an own will, perception and are deprived of social relations (de Haas, 2014, 17). However, although the push and pull model implies the static research perspective, focuses on external factors as the main migration triggers and is not capable of comprehending migration as part of a wider transformation process it is nevertheless instrumental in acquiring a broader general insight into various aspects of international labour migration (Bauer & Zimmermann, 1998), especially from the micro perspective, but also from the meso and macro level.

Researching migration determinants, as factors or forces existing at macro, meso and micro levels, affecting decisions to migrate or not to migrate is considered very important (IMI, 2011). However, their better and more comprehensive understanding has not brought significant progress in the theoretical consideration of migration. Some of the reasons being the overrepresentation of research on the impacts of migration on integration and identity (IMI, 2011), as well as analysing the migration processes from the perspective of receiving countries only, over-emphasising the role of structures and generalisations which oversimplify global 'South-North' migration patterns. Furthermore, there is the lack of a comprehensive framework of migratory patterns, which incorporates complex circular trajectories. Therefore, researchers point out that the micro level studies should consolidate the meso and macro-level migration determinants considerations (IMI, 2011) and ensure new ways for integrating agency and culture into the migration theory (de Haas, 2011).

In order to capture the complexity of migration dynamics, having in mind the analysed period, i.e. the 1990s, when Serbia was affected by the difficult political and economic situation and the wars in

the immediate surroundings, the link between forced and voluntary migration must not be neglected. The concept of mixed migration suggests that all migratory components, such as outward and inward movement, return to home place or further onward movement, even non-movement, involve elements of both coercion and volition (Van Hear et al., 2009), often disregarding the role of human agency in forced migration. Refugees' legal status is usually defined by their lack of choice to be displaced or lack of freedom to stay where they are (de Haas, 2014). However, in spite of the limited options, they have a certain degree of possibility to make a decision on migration. Therefore, it is emphasised that 'having choice to stay or to go, and where to go, captures the very essence of agency' (de Haas, 2011: 18). Furthermore, the role of migrants' aspirations should be emphasised, which relate to both economic and non-economic factors. This particularly applies to professionals and the highly educated, who, depending on their aspirations and capabilities for further professional investment through complex opportunity structures as structural conditions have the freedom to make decisions to migrate (de Haas, 2011). Therefore, in recent years the views that research should reach beyond the economic effects of migrations have been increasingly present. The focus should also be placed on less researched dimension of migrants' experiences of well-being in relation to work/non-work issues (work, family, social and private life domains) and its processual character, especially in a transnational context (Povrzanovic-Frykman et al., 2016). In this regard, there is a need for investigating the individual experiences of highly-skilled migrants on macro, meso and micro forces that frame the migration experience and forces of their adaptation and 'grounding' (Povrzanovic-Frykman et al., 2016; Plöger & Becker, 2015; Reitz et al., 2014).

## Methodological Explanations

The goal of the survey was, using the viewpoint of the highly educated migrants themselves, to broaden the existing knowledge about the reasons for emigrating to Canada and the USA, the level of integration into receiving society, as well as possibility of returning to the country of origin. The selected target group comprised of persons who

had completed university or college studies in Serbia, emigrated from Serbia in 1991 or later, and at the time of the survey resided in Canada or the United States.

Author of the Chapter conducted the online survey between June and October 2008. The so-called *exponential non-discriminative snow-ball sampling* was used to recruit the total sample size of 430 respondents. The process of finding possible survey participants was conceived so as to find respondents who belonged to similar networks. It was carried out in several ways: through professional contacts (scientific-research institutes in Serbia, alumni groups from various faculties in Serbia, diaspora associations in Canada and the US, by contacting the media through which our people living and working in the analysed receiving countries were informed, etc.) and through private contacts, including personal and professional contacts of the surveyed participants themselves.

Therefore, its results cannot be considered as representative and cannot be used for any generalisations about the overall characteristics of emigration of highly educated persons from Serbia. It should be also emphasised that the comparison of the sample with the data of the Canadian and American immigration statistics (Despić, 2015) show that the data obtained in this survey, both according to the time and manner of immigration, are in line with the existing data on immigrants from Serbia, and FR of Yugoslavia.

The questionnaire was composed mainly of close-ended questions. In addition, in the majority of questions there was a possibility for the respondents to provide their comments, that is, not only by choosing answers, but also by descriptively expressing their views. Such answers were subsequently coded and classified in the existing or new modalities. Moreover, many comments of the survey participants were used as an addition to the analysis of results, and / or their descriptive review.

In order to obtain the best possible conclusions, the survey results were mostly included into the result analysis of the survey data (comparing the views and relating the views with social and demographic characteristics of the respondents) where there was a statistically significant association acquired by applying the Chi Square test of Independence.



## Survey Data Analysis

### Who are they and what do they do?

*The most important demographic characteristics:* The survey encompassed a total of 430 respondents (221 women and 209 men), emigrants from Serbia, 276 living in Canada and 154 in the US. After leaving Serbia, the huge majority of the respondents (383 persons, or 89%) settled in the same countries of immigration in which later the survey was conducted. Respondents living in Canada were slightly older than the respondents in the United States. Difference was least evident among the respondents of the most prevalent age group (40–44 years). The vast majority of the respondents were married: 362 respondents, while five cohabited. There were 42 unmarried, 17 divorced, and four widowed. Differences in the age structure of the respondents by the receiving country had influenced the differences in marital structure. In Canada, there was a slightly higher share of married respondents (89% vs. 75%), while in the US there was a visibly higher share of single respondents (5.4% vs. 17.5%).

Largest number of the survey participants, immediately after leaving Serbia settled in the surveyed countries of immigration. The majority (159 persons) emigrated between 1991 and 1994, i.e. at the time of the largest political and economic crisis in the country and the wars in the former SFRY, followed by those who emigrated between 1995 and 1998 (114 persons), as well as between 1999 and 2002 (94 persons). Similar trends were present in both receiving countries, but Canada had a slightly higher share of the respondents who had emigrated from Serbia between 1991 and 1998 (68%) than it was the case in the US (56%). In addition, a higher share of the respondents who had emigrated in 2003 and later was in the US than in Canada (11% vs. 20%), which contributed to the differences in the age structure of the respondents by the receiving countries.

Survey results also confirmed that mainly entire families emigrated from Serbia to overseas countries. Less than 30% of the respondents said that they had emigrated from Serbia alone, i.e. without other family members. The share of the respondents who had emigrated alone was significantly higher in the US (51%) than in Canada (16%). In Canada, the share of the respondents who had emigrated with their

spouse (31%), as well as with a spouse and a child / children (43%) was significantly higher than in the US (18% vs. 17%).

*Educational characteristics:* 414 respondents had university degree, and 16 had college degree. In addition, in Serbia, prior to emigration, a total of 91 participants had completed postgraduate studies. As many as 80% of the respondents had previous work experience, mainly in the field of their expertise: in Canada as many as 90% and in the United States, about two-thirds of the respondents. Different shares of the respondents in relation to work experience prior to emigration were influenced by differences in the age structure of the respondents in Canada and the US, as well as differences in the length of staying abroad.

In accordance with the labour market needs and possibilities for obtaining scholarships in the receiving countries, the largest number of emigrants belonged to the group of technical and natural sciences university graduates, while the smallest number fell into the group of social sciences, humanities and arts graduates. Certain differences were identified in the receiving countries. In Canada, the most frequent respondents belonged to the group of technical sciences graduates (53% of the total respondents in Canada). Their number was more than twice that of the second largest group, the group of natural sciences and mathematics graduates, which had 63 people (23%), followed by the group of social sciences and humanities graduates, with 53 respondents (19%), and almost all the college degree respondents lived in Canada (15 respondents). In the US, there was almost an equal number of technical and natural sciences graduates (60 and 61 respondents respectively). As in the case of Canada, the smallest number of people was in the group of social sciences and humanities graduates (32 persons).

A more complete picture of the educational structure of our recent diaspora in Canada and the United States could also be obtained on the basis of information on education of partners and spouses of the survey participants. At the time of emigration from Serbia, out of a total of 295 persons who had emigrated with partners or had joined partners abroad, 94% (277 persons) said that their partner or spouse had graduated from university or college prior to emigration from Serbia.

*Characteristics of integration at the labour markets of the receiving countries:* Data on citizenship showed that almost three quarters of

the respondents (312 persons) had citizenship of the country of immigration. However, there were significant differences between Canada and the United States. Canadian citizenship was held by 9 out of 10 respondents (250 persons), while it was the case for only 40% of Serbian emigrants to the United States. These differences were to a lesser extent determined by differences in the age structure of immigrants, the time or reason of immigration. However, the high share of the respondents with Canadian passports was largely due to the measure of the Canadian immigration policy to encourage immigration, especially of highly educated staff and professionals who were able to integrate quickly and easily into the domestic labour market.

The fact that 97% of all the respondents were employed, therefore, was not surprising. When asked whether they worked in the field of their expertise, the overwhelming majority (362 respondents, or 85% of all those employed) of the respondents provided a positive answer. In Canada, the share of this category was slightly lower than in the US (82% vs. 89%). Men were predominately employed in the profession compared to women (91% vs. 79%), and this difference was slightly more noticeable in Canada (90% versus 76%) than in the US (93% vs. 84%). Similar results were obtained when asked whether they needed university degree for the work they did, as a positive answer was provided by 86% of the respondents (84% in Canada and 90% in the US). Broken down by gender, men had slightly higher shares (89% and 83%), mainly as a result of differences in Canada (88% and 81%), while in the US, this difference was minimal (92% and 89%).

Such a high share of the employed having jobs in the profession, or jobs requiring a university degree, were largely the result of a good educational base acquired through university education in Serbia. However, the need for constant improvement of professional skills aimed at keeping up with the new developments in science and technology, promoting profession and career building, as well as easy and quick adjustment to the needs of the labour market, had influenced the decision of the survey participants about additional education in the country of immigration. Thus, 262 respondents (60%) attended some form of additional education and among them 66 obtained their master's degrees and 58 doctoral degrees. Respondents in the United States had a higher share of further education than those in Canada (53% vs. 75%), and it mainly referred to the group of technical sciences graduates, where quite a difference was identified (39% vs. 85%).

Data on the type of employment were closely linked to the data on educational attainment, either in the country of origin or reception. Slightly more than half of the employed survey participants were employed in commercial companies (234 persons), 123 of them worked at universities and research units, while the smallest number (59 respondents) worked in a state institutions, health care or education. In addition, the data on the type of employment noticeably pointed to the differences in the motives of emigration of the survey participants: in Canada, the highest share of the employed was in business companies, while in the US the share was almost equal regarding the employed at universities and in businesses. In the US, there was also double the share recorded of the employed at universities and research units.

### Why did they leave? ... How did they manage?

As a starting point for a better understanding of the reasons that significantly affected the highly educated persons in making decisions about emigration from Serbia, the views of the respondents concerning their overall living standards in Serbia before they had emigrated were analysed. Of the total, only 3% of them assessed their living standards as excellent, 119 persons (28%) estimated that before their emigration their living standards in Serbia had been satisfactory, partially satisfactory was assessed by 129 respondents, while the largest number (162 respondents) expressed dissatisfaction with the living-standards. With respect to the receiving countries, there were no significant differences in the obtained results. Changed deterministic basis of emigration from Serbia during the 1990s reveals that the dominant reasons for emigration (respondents have chosen the three most important reasons from the list) were the motives related to the economic and political situation in Serbia. Four most frequently stated reasons from the list of given answers were: uncertainty of the future, poor prospects for the future of children, low living standards and wars.

*'I went through inflation and the first salary as an engineer of 3 German Marks, and I quickly ran to exchange Dinars for Marks... inflation was high and times were tough. I lived with my in-laws because neither my husband nor I could do anything by ourselves in the time of great crisis and inflation (without the sup-*

*port of our families). Those were very difficult times in Serbia ...'* (1967, female, IT architect, emigrated to Canada in 1995).

*'My wife worked at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. She could not advance professionally although she had received several international scholarships (US, Japan), although she completed her doctorate on time and had her papers published in international journals ...'* (1971 male, physicist– university professor, emigrated to the USA in 1996).

*'The main reason is the lack of motivation – low salaries, big responsibility. I worked for foreign organisations and had a good salary, but there were no benefits, pension insurance, great uncertainty ...'* (1967, female, financial manager, emigrated to Canada in 1994).

*'What was already clear back in 1991 was the hopelessness that lay ahead; the years dominated by crooks and gangsters alike. Intellectuals were an undesirable category ... What was left behind us were only our weeping parents and friends'* (1956, female, IT specialist, emigrated to Canada in 1991).

*'Our changing morals, certain values are valid today, some others tomorrow'* (1955, female, musician – university professor, emigrated to Canada in 1996).

*'War, uncertainty and the obviously wrong, destructive policy of the then-President Milošević. We were all in our early thirties. These are the years when one learns and creates the most and builds the future for themselves and their children'* (1955, male, IT manager, emigrated to Canada in 1992).

*'My son was to be recruited!'* (1956, female, telecommunication engineer, emigrated to Canada in 1997).

While for people in Canada the four listed reasons were the most important, in the United States, especially among the younger ones and those who had emigrated alone, poor working conditions and career advancement were among the most important. This was the result of the already mentioned differences in the characteristics of the respondents by age, marital status at the time of emigration (in the United States, the respondents had largely emigrated alone, i.e. without other family members), previous work experience in Serbia, as well as the length of stay abroad and the year of emigration from Serbia.

Order of the selected 'pull' motives contained significant differences between the respondents who had emigrated alone and with family. Unlike Canada – where there were no visible differences among the different categories of respondents and as the majority of the selected reasons were considerably conditioned by economic factors, in the US, especially with the respondents who had emigrated alone, the most important reasons were related to the desire to improve the opportunities for professional advancement.

*'The only country that could import us quickly – within four months of filing the application'* (1959, male, anthropologist, emigrated to Canada in 1994).

*'We did not have much choice. Canada was one of the few countries that accepted emigrants from Serbia (besides Australia and New Zealand). Also, we wanted to go to the English-speaking countries to avoid losing too much time on learning the language. European countries were all closed to immigrants from Serbia'* (1969, female, architect, emigrated to Canada in 2002).

*'Immunoglobulin was free of charge'* (1965 male, dentist, emigrated to Canada in 1993).

*'I agreed with my husband's choice, his brother had already been here'* (1968, female, chemist – university staff, emigrated to Canada in 1995).

Basically for all the respondents in the US who stated the reasons for selecting the destination country, graduate studies and business opportunities were important for the decision:

*'Much shorter the time required for obtaining the doctorate'* (1975, female, electronics engineer – university staff, emigrated to the USA in 2006).

*'The easiest thing was to get a scholarship at a university in the USA'* (1972, male, mechanical engineer, emigrated to the USA in 2002).

*'My ex-wife received an offer to work for 3 years at the University of Texas in Houston'* (1944 male, chemical physicist – university professor, emigrated to the USA in 1992).

*'Ideal country for having own business'* (1965, female, construction engineer, emigrated to the USA in 1991).

What was common for both countries was that the respondents, in choosing the destination country, relied on the previous immigrant experience of friends, relatives and colleagues about the possibilities of obtaining immigrant visas, conditions for starting 'life from the beginning' or favourable conditions for obtaining scholarships for postgraduate studies or employment. Upon arrival in the destination country the majority was referred to their compatriots, not only in terms of maintaining friendly and collegial relations, but also in terms of developing local networks of solidarity and help. This particularly applied to those living in Canada, with children, who largely maintained contacts and often saw their compatriots in Serbia (Despić, 2015).

*'We are connected in every way, whenever you need something there's a compatriot to help, a plumber, carpenter, whatever .... Not to mention friends, going out, patron saint days, birthdays .... and basketball ... it is something special!'* (1965, male, IT engineer, emigrated to Canada in 1992).

*'We are connected in every way – in Toronto there's Belgrade outside Belgrade'* (1963, female, real estate agent, emigrated to Canada in 1993).

*'The professor I work for is from Serbia, and I work with two people from Serbia in the office (who came on my recommendation). There are a lot of students from Serbia at my University...'* (1975, female, electronics engineer – university staff, emigrated to the USA in 2006).

Level of satisfaction with the living standards before emigration could be supplemented with the views on the degree of job satisfaction of the survey participants before they moved to Canada or the United States. Of the total of 343 respondents with the previous work experience in Serbia, nearly half were very satisfied or satisfied with their previous jobs. There were no significant differences between the receiving countries: among the emigrants to US, we registered a slightly lower share of those who had been very satisfied with the job in Serbia (16% vs. 19%) and a slightly higher share of those who had been dissatisfied with the job (20% and 18% respectively).

Larger differences were recorded when asked how long they had planned to stay abroad and also about their plans to return, at the time of emigration. Of the entire sample less than a quarter of the

respondents had planned to return to Serbia, almost a third had intended to permanently settle abroad and almost half (47%) had been undecided. Respondents in Canada in a significantly higher percentage had a negative attitude towards return or were undecided (86% vs. 65%). Moreover, while in Canada there was no noticeable difference regarding the completed university, in the United States a higher share of those who intended to return to Serbia was registered among the natural sciences graduates.

In addition, by comparing satisfaction of the respondents with the job they had done in Serbia with their plans for return to Serbia at the time of emigration, there were different results observed by the countries of destination. Among the respondents in Canada there was a significantly higher share of the respondents who believed they would permanently settle abroad upon leaving Serbia, or that they would come to the decision after some time spent in emigration. Only 8% of the total of 124 respondents in Canada who were very satisfied or satisfied with the job they had done in Serbia before emigration had the intention to return to Serbia. In the US, this was the case with 42% of the respondents (19 out of 45 persons). Similar results were obtained when plans on the length of stay abroad were compared with the respondents' views on the overall standard of living they had had in Serbia. Only 14% of respondents in Canada, who had had excellent or satisfactory living standards in Serbia, had the intention to return to Serbia prior to emigration. On the other hand, in the US, 41% of respondents from this group wanted to return to Serbia after some time spent abroad, prior to emigration. Given that for the majority of respondents a lot of time had passed between the period of emigration and the survey implementation, their answers to some of the questions, especially regarding their plans for return, represented the retrospective cognitive models rather than the process of transformation of their attitudes.

Presented analysis confirms a certain difference in the motives for emigration by the countries of destination, in a slightly more pronounced orientation of the respondents in the United States towards building a career, professional and scientific advancement. This conclusion is also suggested by the differences in the views about the satisfaction with the achieved living standards observed by the receiving countries. Although the vast majority was very satisfied or satisfied



with the standards at the time of the survey, the respondents in Canada showed statistically significant association between the living standards satisfaction and the self-realisation within family (Despić, 2015). On the other hand, in the US there were significant associations identified between the views about the living standards and professional life goals. More respondents from the US employed in commercial companies believed that their standards of living were excellent than it was the case with the employed at universities or in the public sector and administration (Despić, 2015).

However, with the respondents both in Canada and the US, the events on the political scene and economic instability in Serbia – the country of origin, could influence not only the extent of emigration, but also formulate plans on the length of stay abroad and return to the country of origin (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2013; Cohen-Goldner & Weiss, 2011). This was also evident while comparing plans of the survey participants about returning to Serbia, which they had made just before emigration, with consideration to the respective years of going abroad. The rise in the shares of the respondents who were not sure about their plans for return or who intended to stay permanently abroad, was most prominent during the years of the biggest political and economic crisis in the country, in 1992 and 1993, but also at the time of the bombing threats in 1998 and the bombing of Serbia in 1999, and slightly less pronounced in 2003, the year of the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić. In contrast, after the enthusiasm at the beginning of the observed period (1991), the share of the respondents who wanted to return to Serbia was the lowest exactly during the biggest crisis in the country, as well as in the aftermath of the bombing of Serbia in 1999. Immediately after the change of government in late 2000, there was a short-term increase in the share of persons who had a desire to, after some time, return to Serbia.

Analysis of the results regarding the reasons for going abroad confirms that the structural factors, political circumstances in the country, as well as economic factors significantly influenced decisions of the survey participants to move out of Serbia. Similar results were obtained in studies conducted in Serbia during the 1990s about the emigration intentions of highly qualified people and scientists (Bolčić, 2002; Grečić et al, 1996).

## Do they think about returning... Who would return?

Data on satisfaction with life achievements and working conditions, as well as ties maintained with the community of origin, appear as important elements for obtaining a more detailed picture of the climate of our intellectual diaspora when it comes to plans for a possible return to Serbia as the country of origin, as well as whether they express desire and willingness to cooperate with its institutions (Kōu et al., 2015; Phan, M et al., 2015). It should be noted that at the time of the survey, the largest number of respondents felt that the political and economic situation in Serbia – as an essential precondition for the establishment and development of such bridges, was unfavourable. Every third respondent felt that the changes were insignificant in scope and unsatisfactory, while more than 40% believed the changes were significant, but that it was far from a satisfactory pace of development. Observed by the receiving countries, there were no noticeable differences: in Canada a slightly higher proportion of the respondents believed that changes were greatly or significantly better than at the time of their emigration. However, one reason may be that the respondents in Canada, on average, stayed longer abroad than their counterparts in the US, and the majority left Serbia at the time of the greatest crisis in the country during the 1990s. In both countries, there was a significant association between the views on the information received about the situation in Serbia and the views about changes in the political and economic scene in the country of origin. Respondents who considered themselves very well informed about the political and socio-economic situation in Serbia, in the greater proportion opted for answers expressing positive views about the changes in Serbia or answers emphasising significant changes that occurred, but it was still far from the satisfactory pace of development (55% in the group of very well informed compared to 45% in the group of partly informed). While in Canada there were no noticeable differences in the view of the respondents by the type of employment, the respondents in the United States employed at universities evaluated the political and economic situation in Serbia as significantly better than those employed in business companies. Even 60% of the employed at universities believed the changes were largely on track or

were significant, while it was the view of only 33% of the employed in business companies.

Based on the provided answers and comments, it can be concluded that the respondents expected more from the economic and political progress after the fall of the Milošević regime. In the comments, they provided critical reviews about the poor functioning of certain institutions in Serbia, such as the judiciary, public administration, health care system, where, in their opinion, the poor way of managing and functioning still prevailed, including widespread corruption and dominance of personal benefit at the expense of the common welfare of all citizens and the country.

*'... Too much organised crime, the remaining state/public property has been sold for personal profit, the lack of noncriminal capital the economy can be based upon' (1972, female, IT engineer – researcher, emigrated to the USA in 1995).*

*'If the crime and corruption were eradicated, and if the safety of investments was higher, normal people would move forward and pull Serbia with them, but the way it is now ... not much to hope for. No one there (in Serbia – author's remark) thinks about the country ... First of all I think of those who are paid to fight for that country, not to undermine it and sell it out. If Serbia was a normal country, few Serbs would stay in Canada, I know that for sure' (1957, male, mechanical engineer, emigrated to Canada in 1998).*

*'...complicated administration regarding every area of life' (1956, female, seamstress, emigrated to the USA in 2003).*

*'... the system should ensure not the social but the private benefit and above all the initiative. These countries operate in that way (Canada, USA, Australia – author's remark). They do everything for you to succeed so that you have to pay taxes! It's as simple as that ... I completed my doctorate in Australia, but I could not even validate my diploma at the University I graduated from (in Serbia – author's remark)!' (1964, male, mechanical engineer, emigrated to Canada in 1991).*

The unfavourably assessed situation in the country reflected in the views on return to Serbia of the most educated emigrants in Canada and the United States. Although plans cannot be considered

a final decision on return, the survey results showed that most respondents believed that the chances were very small or even non-existent. However, the attitudes of highly educated emigrants from Serbia who had settled and successfully integrated into the economically developed countries, primarily in the US, did not differ from those of their colleagues from other countries of origin. Not only did the vast majority of highly educated emigrants from economically less developed countries want to remain and live and work in the United States, but it was also the case with emigrants from economically developed countries of Europe, especially among the employed in the field of science and research activities (Khoo et al., 2008; Laudel, 2005; Balaz et al., 2004). Almost a quarter believed they would certainly not return, while about 40% were not sure whether they would return, except in case the situation in Serbia significantly improved compared to the conditions at the time the survey was conducted. The small probability that our recent overseas emigrants would in due course decide to return to Serbia to live and work might also be illustrated by the finding that every fifth participant in the survey did not know whether they wanted to return to Serbia permanently. Only 10% of the total number said they would certainly return to Serbia to live, out of which most respondents neither knew when this would happen nor were making plans for a possible return to the country. With regard to the receiving countries, there were no noticeable differences in the observed shares. However, when the results were analysed by the scientific profiles of the respondents' university majors, certain differences could be identified. In Canada, the share of technical and natural sciences graduates who claimed to be definitely or probably returning was similar (22% and 18%) and the share of respondents from humanities or artistic professions was significantly higher (31%). Similar associations between the groups of faculties and plans to return were obtained in the US, only their difference was visibly pronounced. Technical sciences graduates had the lowest shares of the respondents that would definitely or probably return. Compared to natural sciences and mathematics graduates their share was almost twice lower (21%) and almost three times lower than the share of the respondents from humanities or artistic professions (35%). Analysis of the results also showed a significant association between the plans for return and views towards integration in the receiving soci-

ety, which significantly demonstrated to what extent the process of adaptation and 'grounding' (Plöger & Becker, 2015) was important for making decisions on subsequent migration. In both countries, the respondents who felt fully integrated into receiving society accounted for the lowest share in the group of persons who certainly intended to return to Serbia (33% in Canada and 39% in the US). Their share was rising in proportion to how the views about return were becoming less determined, and the highest share was among the respondents who said they would certainly not return (76% in Canada and 86% in the US). In addition, plans to return were in a significant statistical association with the respondents' views on preserving the cultural identity of the nation they came from (Despić, 2015). Respondents from the two receiving countries who thought they would certainly or likely return to Serbia to a greater extent than in other observed groups believed that the cultural identity of the country of origin should be fully preserved (94% in Canada and 84% in the US).

Views of the respondents point to the lack of real opportunities for the return from overseas countries, clearly indicating that the way to establish contacts and build bridges with our intellectual diaspora should be primarily developed through finding appropriate ways of exchange and circulation of knowledge and cooperation 'at a distance' (Despić, 2015; Predojević-Despić, 2010). As one mechanical engineer from Canada concluded:

*'The state must be a service for citizens and economy by having a legal framework that works... Now the state is primarily a service for political parties that make their influence with their unprofessional staff. As time goes fewer of us will return because our children are growing, and they are not emotionally attached to Serbia and are fully integrated in this society, while the ties with Serbia are slowly breaking. Our potential for the economy of such a small and poor country is huge, because we are in our prime ages, with extensive professional and life experience that people in Serbia do not have. ... If the state is counting on nostalgia to attract people, they are so wrong. It should create conditions, help in organising and those who want will find their interest in developing businesses' (1967, male, mechanical engineer, emigrated to Canada in 1996).*

## Conclusion

The analysis of individual motives of highly educated emigrants from Serbia who live and work in Canada and the United States confirms that their decisions on migration in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and later on was strongly influenced by structural factors: uncertainty of the future, poor prospects for the future of children, low living standards and wars. However, the survey results confirm that the human agency, although influenced by severe political and socio-economic conditions in the country, contributed to the making of a decision to emigrate. This can be also seen while analysing socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and their views observed by the receiving countries. Graduates, mostly in technical disciplines, emigrated to Canada, mainly with the previous work experience in the profession. They left Serbia mostly with other family members, in the 1990s, and especially during the biggest crisis in Serbia. On the other hand, technical and natural sciences graduates equally emigrated to the United States, with no previous work experience. They moved to the US mainly on their own. In addition, the respondents in the United States significantly more opted for further education after immigration. The analysis of the motives emphasised as the most important for choosing the immigration country also highlighted the difference between professional immigrants in the analysed countries. While in Canada the respondents mostly chose economic reasons, in the US the most important reasons were related to the desire for professional advancement.

The difference between the respondents can also be seen in the data on integration into the society of the receiving country, particularly in the views about the satisfaction with life achievements. In both countries, after the initial period of adjustment, the respondents were mostly satisfied or even very satisfied with their degree of integration, both in the labour market and in receiving society in a broader sense. However, among the respondents in Canada, unlike the US, there was a statistically significant association between the standards of living satisfaction and the self-realisation within family, whereas in the US there was a significant statistical association between the views about standards and achievements in the professional sense.

Although of similar economic development and with good working conditions and opportunities for career advancement of highly educated immigrants, as well as of the achievement of a satisfactory living standards, the analysed receiving countries differ in terms of attracting highly educated professionals of somewhat different characteristics. All the respondents settled in about the same time leaving the country affected by deep crisis, but to some extent they differ according to certain socio-demographic characteristics, reasons for emigration, ambitions towards business accomplishments and life goals. This shows that immigration policy and measures of integration into receiving society can have a significant impact on attracting talents and professionals, i.e. the desired profile of immigrants. They can also be an important structural factor in decision-making about migration, but also on subsequent migration or return to the country of origin.

As the country of origin, Serbia should be oriented towards exploring possibilities to incorporate these incentives into measures of migration policy for attracting and cooperating with professional diaspora that would allow the use of knowledge, experience and creative capabilities of heterogeneous structures of our professionals abroad. The survey has shown that the possibility for return would be more certain for the respondents in both countries employed at universities and research centres, as well as for social sciences graduates, and for emigrants in the US who involved in the natural sciences or mathematics. An important conclusion is that graduates in technical sciences in both the receiving countries show the least interest in the possibility to return.

The survey also confirms that for respondents in both Canada and the US it is important to maintain ties with compatriots in the receiving country, as well as with family, friends and colleagues in Serbia. Almost all the survey participants emphasise the importance of being well informed about the situation in Serbia, even after a long time spent abroad. Furthermore, there is a significant statistical association between the plans to return and the need of the respondents to preserve the cultural identity of the nation they come from.

On the other hand, views of the respondents also point to the lack of real opportunities for the massive return of our professionals living in overseas countries. However, the results confirm that the ties with compatriots and the country of origin are intense, and the need for

being well informed about the situation in Serbia is quite strong. This suggests that there are good preconditions for establishing contacts and stronger ties with our overseas intellectual diaspora, as well as for developing adequate ways for exchange and circulation of knowledge and cooperation 'at a distance'. Strengthening ties along with creation and continuous networking of different structures of our intellectual diaspora as potential carriers of new knowledge and modern technologies that are nowadays developing in a galloping pace and Serbia, to which they are still related, could produce a significant boost to changes not only in the economic, but also in wider social context. However, besides economic development in the country, the main precondition for development of any form of cooperation and networking is that the state measures are directed towards policies, encouraging a positive climate for scientific research, innovation and business cooperation.

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