HOW TO MOTIVATE POLICY MAKERS TO FACE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES?

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ABSTRACT: If we want to understand the deeper truth, or intend to interpret phenomena through the perception of a specific population, a more holistic perspective might be necessary. By applying foresight exercise, some new patterns might be discovered and shifts in study aspects inhibited. Such an approach intends to give meaning to future perceptions, expectations and fears of experts, decision makers and civilians. Its activities are designed to address critical questions, which might significantly shape the future of a country in the coming years. Foresight exercise reinforces thinking about what future steps should be taken, if a specific scenario becomes reality. Personal life stories based on binary opposition of the futures of a country can be used to unambiguously show the policy makers all the relevant implications that different futures might have regarding fertility, migration, population ageing, human capital and labour market in Serbia in the forthcoming period. Furthermore, it seems that such foresight exercise, as a qualitative approach, can provide additional insight into quantitative methods of forecasting demographic future of a country.

KEYWORDS: foresight exercise, qualitative research, policy makers, demographic future, international migration, Serbia

SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR SOCIETY

Nowadays, more than ever before, there seems to be a need for understanding a range of socio-economic challenges we face. Namely, the first decades of the 21st century are marked by financial crisis, political turbulences, serious climate changes, ecological issues, deficiency of water and energy, terrorism, demographic disturbances and so on. It is important to study the characteristics, determining factors, consequences, patterns and the expected changes in the foreseeable future for each of them, including the cause-and-effect relationships.

Knowledge gained from numerous researches in the field of social sciences can improve political decision making because the formulation, adoption and evaluation of those decisions implies being well informed. However, many obstacles, both contextual and structural, hinder the dialogue between the researchers and decision makers. Researchers and policy makers have separate work environments, use different wording, have distinct temporal perceptions, have different views of utilizing knowledge and information, and have different methodologies and modi operandi.

Considerable effort is required in both communities in order to mitigate the observed obstacles. The culture of cooperation between policy makers and scientific community is more developed in the countries with decentralized decision making model than in the countries with a centralized model. Still, the researchers are not fully content even in the environments in which this kind of dialogue, i.e. transfer, has a longer standing tradition. They are in search of modalities for a more successful motivation of decision makers to act strategically using the knowledge gained from social sciences.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

During and after the wars in the Western Balkans in the 1990s, Serbia became one of the main destinations for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and for internally displaced persons from the southern province of Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, a large scale emigration from the country took place [Nikitović and Lukić 2010]. Afterwards, in accordance with political stabilization of the region, forced migration ceased. However, emigration process continued (at lower rates though) due to failure of economic recovery. Consequently, net migration balance of the country varied roughly between -10,000 and -15,000 persons per year during the last decade [ISS, 2013]. Migration trends in Serbia in the recent period have a negative impact on population development, as they result in a decrease of the population size of the country, reduction of total number of births, reduction of labour resources and have an adverse effect on the age structure of the population.

Recent immigrants in Serbia mainly consist of refugees from former Yugoslav republics and internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija while the share of foreigners originating outside the former Yugoslavia is drastically lower [Nikitović and Lukić 2010; SORS, 2013: 39]. Emigrants from Serbia are typically younger than the population in the country. Those working in traditional European destinations mostly have low education, while brain

drain, renewed since the 1990s, is considered to be an important part of the emigration flows to overseas countries [Grupa 484, 2010].

Population and labour force are declining and growing older. These clearly identified characteristics of contemporary Serbia could not be avoided even by the most optimistic scenario of future demographic and labour market processes. In the following decade, before the expected accession to the EU, net migration losses might reduce slightly. Short lasting large volume emigration could be a realistic future for Serbia just after the EU accession as it was the case in Poland after 2004, but in the long term a turn towards positive net migration is considered to be a plausible scenario [Kupiszewski, Kupiszewska and Nikitović 2012].

In Serbia, there is no sufficiently developed consciousness in the political and public discourse about the significance of the migratory phenomenon. The potentials of migrations in country development programs, including demographic revitalization and particularly the requirement to comprehensively act in this sphere, are not completely recognized. There is no migration component of population change in political, economic, academic or in general public discourse. If migration is mentioned at all, it is typically used in a negative context. The brain drain has become synonymous with emigration as the echo of the 1990s. The reasons for the misrecognition of the immigration potential should be sought in traditionalism, unfavourable economic and social situation, general insecurity, the country's isolation, and the like, but also in lack of information [ISS, 2013].

FORESIGHT AS A METHOD

Foresight as a methodological approach converges policy analysis, strategic planning and futures studies. It can be briefly defined as "a systematic, participatory, future-intelligence-gathering and medium-to-long-term vision-building process aimed at present day decisions and mobilizing common actions" [JRC-IPTS, 2001: 5]. It emerged in decision-making context following the WWII within the military strategic planning and then in 1960s was used by large corporations as part of business strategic planning with respect to technological change and progress [Miles, Harper, Georghiou, Keenan and Popper 2008]. Since the 1990s it has been increasingly applied in public policy and policy analysis, also at the EU level.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used. Examples of quantitative techniques include Delphi surveys, modelling and simulation, or structural analysis, while widely used qualitative techniques are scenario building, creativity methods (brainstorming, brain mapping), SWOT analysis or expert panels. Foresight exercise as a qualitative analytical method uses a holistic approach in order to answer questions which cannot be expressed as numerical information. It develops scenarios which consider a range of plausible futures and how these could emerge from the realities of today. The scenarios recognise that people hold beliefs and make choices that lead to outcomes. Scenarios ask "what if?" questions to explore alternative views of the future and create plausible

stories around them. They consider long-term trends in economics and social changes, as well as the motivating factors that drive the changes. In doing so, they help build visions of the future. Scenarios help decision makers reconcile apparent contradictions or uncertainties. They also have the potential to raise awareness around the issues that could become increasingly important to society. Organisations using scenarios find it easier to recognise impending disruptions in their own operating environment, such as political changes, demographic shifts or recessions [JRC-IPTS, 2008].

FORESIGHT EXERCISE IN SERBIA

The foresight exercise was carried out as a part of the SEEMIG project[1] on December 12–13, 2013 in the Institute for Education and Culture "Cnesa" in Kanjiža. It was organized by Serbian project partners: Institute of Social Sciences, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the Municipality of Kanjiža. The exercise was built as a qualitative exploratory approach based on creativity methods (brain mapping and brainstorming) and scenario building on two levels: macro and micro. The authors of the paper were the foresight moderators. There were 24 participants divided into three groups: experts, decision makers, and representatives of migrants/civil society.

Each group identified key drivers of migration and labour market in the near future in Serbia during three parallel brainstorming sessions on the first day. Participants were encouraged to talk about the factors which might surprise them due to their recent low probability, yet, which might significantly impact the course of their future.

On the second day, during the discussion of all participants, five key drivers were selected according to priority and put into binary matrix afterwards. The moderators then divided the participants into two groups. Based on the matrix, one group had to create a positive country-level scenario and the other a negative one up to 2025. Finally, each of these groups applied the previously developed macro-level scenario to life of a specific person, which resulted in two individual stories.

The participants were aged between early twenties and mid-fifties. Most of them were born in Serbia. Still, some of them were born in the territory of former Yugoslavia, but now have Serbian citizenship. A number of them are members of the Hungarian minority group. When it comes to their experiences, they differ from group to group. The experts have relevant experiences in demography, social geography, sociology, economy, psychology, political studies and human rights. Decision makers came from the Ministry of Labour,

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[1] Managing Migration and its Effects in South-East Europe (SEEMIG) is a strategic project on migratory, human capital and demographic processes in South-East Europe, as well as their effects on labour markets, national and regional economies. It is funded by the European Union's South-East Europe Programme and includes research institutes, statistical offices and local governments from eight countries. The main goal of the project is to empower public administrations to develop and implement policies and strategies by using enhanced datasets and empirical evidence. For further information visit: http://seemig.eu/

Employment, Veteran and Social Policy, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Border Police, Ministry of Interior, Office for Human and Minority Rights, Asylum Protection Centre, Centre for Social Work in Kanjiža and Migration Officer in Kanjiža. The group of migrants/ civil society was represented by students who studied and plan to continue studying abroad, retired with children abroad, local branch of Red Cross, social workers who work with illegal immigrants, and non-governmental organization Group 484 dealing with migration issues.

The results of the parallel brainstorming sessions were presented in Table 1. As it can be seen, all three groups chose almost the same factors, even though the definition used varies. All of them mentioned *political stability*, either on national or local level. Also, *economy* was emphasised. *Institutional support* was mentioned, although some groups went a bit further and chose concrete areas such as social and legal rights. *Human capital* from the aspect of education system and migration flows was listed as one of the key drivers in the expert group. Similarly, *youth and education* were recognized as valuable human resources in the group of migrants/civil society. *System of values* both on micro and macro level, that needs to be restored after its collapse in the 1990s, actually influences all the drivers. It is a somewhat elusive category and refers to intangible values such as culture, moral, and ethics which shape the community as a whole. Its collapse brought money dictating the trends, poor taste in culture, hunger for scandals and no wish for facing the real situation. *Accession to the EU* was mentioned by all three groups. Participants from the group of migrants/civil society felt that the time span was insufficient for it to become a key factor. Experts thought that the EU accession as a factor is included in the political stability and economic growth. In the table below selected key drivers in each group are listed by priority.

Table 1. *Key drivers of migration and labour market in Serbia according to the three groups*

Drivers	Experts	Public Officials/ Decision makers	Migrants/Civil society
1	Political stability	Stable political system	Local self-government as a factor of support to the citizens
2	Economic growth	Economic development	IT sector (virtual business, employment, new business models)
3	Institutional background	Social development	Legal regulations in connection to employment
4	Human capital	Change in the system of values	Youth/education
5		Accession to the EU	

As the follow-up activity of the brainstorming sessions, participants under the guidance of the foresight facilitators reviewed the factors which they ranked previously, and all together selected four, which they considered to be the most

important, by merging the findings of all three groups: experts, decision makers, and migrants/civil society (Figure 1). Then, with the help of the moderators they were encouraged to put the drivers into a matrix of binary opposing scenarios (Table 2).

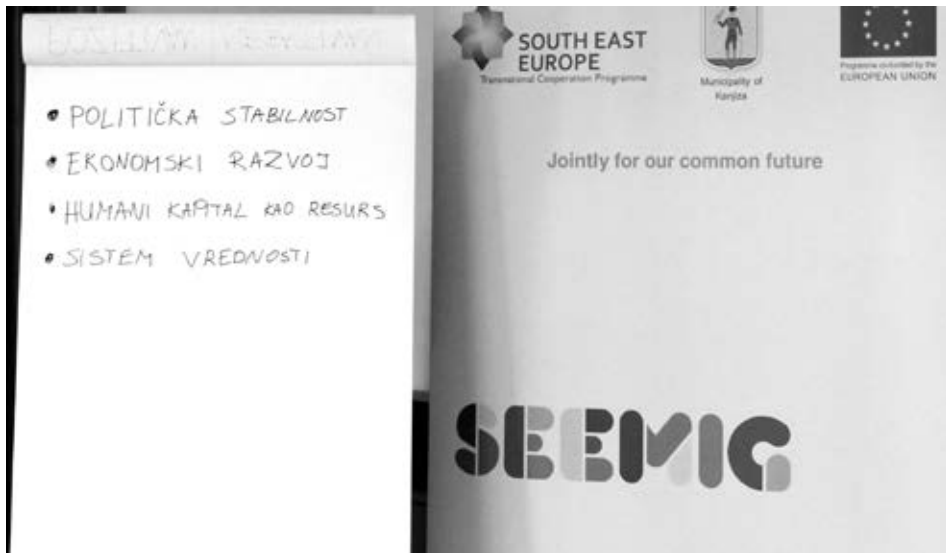Figure 1. *Key drivers of migration and labour market in the near future of Serbia*

Table 2. *Matrix of the binary opposing scenarios*

Drivers	Positive scenario	Negative scenario
Political stability	Stable political situation	Instable political situation
Economic development	Strong economy	Economic recession
Human capital as a resource	Negligible brain drain and brain waste	Brain drain and brain waste
System of values	Restored system of values	Degraded system of values

During the creation of national scenarios (positive and negative) in mixed groups the participants went through the phenomenon of migration and labour market in Serbia until 2025 keeping in mind the matrix key drivers as guidelines. The discussions began with the influence of political stability and economy. Special emphasis was put on the system of values. Institutional background and bureaucracy were discussed, as well as education, health care and social systems. The process of developing scenarios in both groups was fluent.

The group that made a positive scenario was impressed by the ability to perceive the future of Serbia from a completely different point of view from

the one dominant during the last two decades. Such an approach resulted in the following scenario: Political stability would provide positive conditions for improvement in economy resulting in growth in the fields of agriculture, energy and industry. The education system would go through intensified process of reforms and modernization in accordance with EU standards. Businesses would be easier to initialize due to simplified bureaucratic regulations. Increase in economy would encourage the return of emigrants who left the country in the recent period. Also, it is expected that Serbia would become attractive for foreign students as it was the case before the 1990s. Awareness would be raised concerning all kinds of diversities that would result in restoring of system of values.

It seemed that it was much easier for the second group to make a negative country scenario given that the negative realization of key drivers of migration and labour market has been shaping reality in Serbia for a long period of time. Thus, the presence of linear trends in the following scenario was not unexpected.

Political instability would lead to a decrease in economy, which in turn would cause poverty in the society. As always, poverty is the first step to the downfall of values, such as culture, moral, ethics, etc. Corruption would increase. The education system, health and social protection systems would start to regress. The country would be further disintegrated. The feelings of insecurity, lack of perspective, and impotence would be commonly experienced. Emigration flows would increase while fertility rates would decrease mainly due to postponement of births. The process of population ageing would be intensified.

A single hero was chosen to depict individual scenarios, and she was put into both positive and negative country scenarios. Olga is a 24 year old nurse who now lives in Kraljevo, but moved there from Orahovac as an internally displaced person. She is an only child. She works in a kiosk. She is single and lives with her parents in a flat.

She was put into both positive and negative country context. In the positive country scenario, Olga gets a job in Mataruška banja (Mataruška Spa), in a medical rehabilitation centre, established by Milan George Jovanović from American diaspora. She completes a course of chiropractic and gets a better job position. Her husband is an agronomist, a returnee from Holland, specialized in organic plants production. They have 2 children by 2018, and a third by 2022. Olga leaves her job and they build their own house where they start their organic based agricultural business.

In the opposite country scenario, Olga works in a kiosk and falls in love with a car mechanic who is employed. They get married and live with her parents. When she is 28 they get their first baby, and can no longer live with her parents. They start thinking of moving abroad. First her husband goes to Italy and start working in the field. Then Olga and the child join him. She soon gets a job as a caretaker in a nursing home for the elderly. They get their second child. Both kids grow up as Italians. Olga and her family do not return to Serbia.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Experts, decision makers and migrants/civil society represented the three groups that participated in the foresight exercise. Participants' views regarding migration and labour market processes in Serbia largely coincide with the recent findings of demographers [Radivojević and Nikitović 2010; Penev and Predojević-Despić 2012; Rašević 2012; Nikitović 2013]. All three groups chose almost the same key factors, which, in their opinion, would influence their own future and future of Serbia, even though the definition used varied. They recognized political stability, economy, institutional background, and system of values in the society as the key drivers of migration and labour market in the near future. The issue of the EU accession is included in the political stability and economic growth.

Increase in economy, education system in line with modern demands, and return of emigrants who recently left the country are the main pillars of the positive country scenario that experts, decision makers, migrants and representatives of civil society defined in this exercise. In the negative country scenario, political instability and weak economy leads to regression in the vital systems of the country. Emigration flows increase while population ageing intensifies.

Since the participants do not see Serbia as an immigration destination for foreigners in the next 12 years, the only opportunity in positive country scenario regarding migration and labour market might be the return of emigrants who have recently left the country. The rationale is that expected economic growth will not be strong enough to induce significant immigration flows from abroad by 2025 because the current level of the economic development is very low.

Given the recent dramatic events during the 1990s in Serbia, the linear development of the unfavourable processes in the negative scenario did not come as a surprise. Participants see emigration as almost exclusively negative phenomenon since the recent outflows from the country consisted mainly of young and well educated persons unlike the typical outflows of guest workers between the 1960s and 1980s based on the bilateral country contracts, which primarily targeted low-skilled segment of unemployed people. In addition, the number of foreign workers in Serbia is currently negligible, which did not give enough elements for thinking of immigration as the counterbalancing factor for labour shortages in the conditions of negative scenario.

The increase of permanent emigration of prime-age workers from the country, as presented in the negative country scenario, could be a serious challenge for the health and social protection systems in the conditions of intensive population ageing. Pension system sustainability could be particularly in danger. Major tasks for the policy makers in that sense would be to deal with rising demands in medical sector, to improve elderly care system, and to reform pension system due to low labour force base.

Two life stories can be transformed into direct messages to policy makers, which is one of the basic aims of the foresight exercise. Persons from the Province of Kosovo and Metohija, who were internally displaced across the country since 1999, are integrated in their new local communities. The realization of the positive country scenario on individual level would bring back young

emigrants who have different work experiences and new knowledge from developed economies, who have enough incentive for launching small business in Serbia. Also, from a demographic viewpoint, this scenario would help young couples achieve their norms of reproduction. Finally, the positive country scenario shows that individuals would be more encouraged for job mobility as compared to the heritage from the socialist period.

Table 3. *Synthesis table of opportunities, threats and policy implications by the two opposing scenarios up to 2025*

Future up to 2025	Opportunities	Threats	Policy implications
Positive country scenario	Return of recent emigration	Concerns of residents for their job positions in the labour market	Measures important to facilitate return
Negative country scenario		Increasing permanent emigration of prime-age workers from the country Intensifying of population ageing	Pension system sustainability in danger Improved elderly care system Demands in medical sectors rise

The no return migration outflows from Serbia to the overseas destinations (USA, Australia), renewed during the 1990s, are considered to be general patterns of emigration from the country; thus, while searching for a job in the conditions of negative country context, emigrants from Serbia would strive to permanently settle down even in close European destinations, such as Italy, unlike the case of working emigration (guest workers) to Germany between 1960s and 1980s. Consequently, intensified population ageing would bring new challenges in medical sector, elderly care system, and pension system.

Both personal stories are illustrative enough to clearly demonstrate differences between two opposite futures in regard to migration, human capital and labour market in Serbia in the forthcoming period. They could be inspiring for policy makers to realize the importance of migration issue and its implications. It seems to us that this foresight exercise, as a qualitative approach, could provide additional insights to quantitative methods in forecasting the future of a country.

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КАКО МОТИВИСАТИ КРЕАТОРЕ ПОЛИТИКЕ ДА СЕ СУОЧЕ СА ДЕМОГРАФСКИМ ИЗАЗОВИМА?

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РЕЗИМЕ: Ако желимо дубље да сагледамо истину, или намеравамо да тумачимо појаве кроз сагледавање одређене популације, биће нам неопходна холистичка

перспектива. Применом вежби предвиђања могу се открити неки нови обрасци, а померања у аспектима проучавања могу се инхибирати. Циљ таквог приступа јесте давање смисла будућим опажањима, очекивањима и страховима како стручњака и оних који одлучују тако и обичних грађана. Његове активности усмерене су ка решавању критичних питања, што може значајно да обликује будућност земље у наредним годинама. Вежба предвиђања јача размишљање о будућим корацима које треба предузети уколико неки специфичан сценарио постане стварност. Личне приче из живота засноване на бинарној опозицији различитих будућности једне земље креаторима политике могу недвосмислено да покажу све релевантне импликације које би различите будућности могле имати у погледу наталитета, миграција, старења становништва, људског капитала и тржишта рада у Србији у наредном периоду. Осим тога, чини се да таква вежба предвиђања, као квалитативни приступ, може да пружи додатан увид у квантитативне методе предвиђања демографске будућности земље.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: вежба предвиђања, квалитативно истраживање, креатори политике, демографска будућност, међународне миграције, Србија