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REVIEW SCIENTIFIC PAPER

THE IMPACT OF EMIGRATION FROM SERBIA TO HUNGARY ON THE HUMAN RESOURCES OF VOJVODINA

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ABSTRACT: In the recent decades the migration processes and circular migration are increasing worldwide and have become more and more complex. There has been a new type of international migration – back and forth international migration. Nowadays, job seeking in the international space, brain circulation, multiple citizenship and identity, property ownership and consumption at the place of origin and at destination residence result in completely new lifestyles in Central and Eastern Europe, too. After the disintegration of the socialist regime both in Serbia and Hungary, new types of emigrants from Serbia appeared in Hungary, namely students, highly qualified workers, entrepreneurs, elders and circulars. The most recent types of migrants along the Serbian–Hungarian border area are: economic emigrants (emigrant physical workers); creative class (entrepreneurs, businessmen, international traders); circulars and seasonal emigrants, as well as students.

The hypothesis of this work is that the main motive of emigration from Serbia to Hungary is the economic motive, especially job-seeking. The analysis of emigration from Serbia to Hungary is based on the interviews and questionnaire-based research obtained among emigrants from Vojvodina to Hungary, who were living in Hungary or commuting there regularly between 2010 and 2013. The obtained data prove the hypothesis. The economic motives are present even when the emigrants do not stay in Hungary, but move off to more developed countries of the EU.

KEYWORDS: emigration, the motives of emigration, Vojvodina, Hungary

INTRODUCTION

Population is one of the key factors of social and economic development of each country. Due to different levels of economic development, life standards, and political stability in different countries, population is often moving to other countries. Migration processes significantly influence the demographic and economical situation of each country.

According to Jordan and Düvell [2003], migration is representing the movements of people across political borders. Consequently, they are transnational processes. The transnational concept describes the phenomenon of migrants, who are living in a foreign country but do not cut off their relations (family, cultural, business, civilian, and religious) with the home country. Transnationalism means higher variations in the length of residence time at the new place, higher seasonal variations, higher frequencies of cross border mobility, creation of multi-dimensional (economic, political, cultural, linguistic) transnational social areas. These activities and relations are present at the same time among more nations. Transnational and peripatetic lifestyles have been emerging along the border zone with heavy travels, property purchases and changes of working places. The complete integration is not necessary in the destination areas because of the frequent spatial movements. On the other side of the coin, new kind of problems of identity crisis has been emerging among transnational migrants.

The focus of this paper is emigration from Serbia to Hungary. The aim of this paper is to present the types of emigrants and their motives, as well as their transnational relations in the Serbian-Hungarian cross-border region.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EMIGRATION PROCESSES FROM VOJVODINA IN THE 1990s

Migration and transnational relations are regular phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe. Migration was one of the peculiarities of the population in the former Yugoslavia and nowadays it is characteristic for the inhabitants of Serbia and its northern multi-ethnic province, Vojvodina, too.

The massive emigration from former Yugoslavia had begun in 1960s. On the basis of the 1971 census, the number of migrants was 750,000 [Statistical Institute of Serbia, 1985] according to the official estimates; at the end of 1973, there were about 1,150,000 Yugoslav migrants in Western Europe [Grečić 2002].

The emigrational territories (from where the labour force emigrated) were not the most developed regions of Yugoslavia, nor the most densely populated ones where living circumstances were harsh. Migration was encouraged by the unemployment and dissatisfaction with social-financial standards. The rate of emigration from the present territory of Serbia was the highest in Vojvodina, though this part of the country was the most developed. Within Vojvodina, the most intensive emigrational regions were the relatively underdeveloped South Banat and North Bačka, which, on the other hand, was economically and culturally the most developed area.

In the 1990s, the proximity of the war and its dangers resulted in further waves of massive and rapid migration, both within the borders of the country and abroad. About 73,000 people left Serbia and moved overseas [Grečić 2002]. Tragedies of whole nations and ethnic groups forced many families to leave their country. Gábrity Molnár [2011] underlines that at the end of the twentieth century, the antecedent and consequences of NATO bombing (poverty, military mobilization, and insecurity) generated massive migration of Vojvodinian Hungarians, too. According to the same author's moderate estimation, from 1990s up to now, approximately 50,000 Hungarians emigrated from Vojvodina.

“The migration periods strongly depend on the (geo)political circumstances of the period in question, since the most significant (forced) migration waves were triggered by wars and by the change of political systems and state borders. During peaceful periods, mostly economic inequalities and regional disparities influence voluntary migration. Beside the political and economic factors, ethnicity plays the most important role in the examined migration processes [Grečić 2001]. According to our perception, every migratory process in which ethnicity represents symbolic, cultural or social capital is considered to be ethnic migration (e.g. the forced migrations generated by the changes of borders, the migration wave of Serb refugees to Serbia and the resettlement of Vojvodinian Hungarians in Hungary)” [Tátrai *et al.* 2013: 36]

Pál [2003] states that as the result of the processes of democratization and economic stabilization in Serbia, the emigration to Hungary has decreased. From then on (especially after Hungary's accession to the EU) the importance of the establishment of cross-border relationships is obvious. Mass migration has been replaced by regional and cross-border relationships that require mutual planning and programs of cooperation. For instance, it requires the synchronization of the local developmental plans between cross-border municipalities of the Southern Great Plain region in Hungary and Vojvodina, from the Serbian side. Beside that, the role of spontaneously co-operating organizations that became Europe-regional formations or territorial co-operational groupings bear significant importance to this day.

Today the majority of emigrants from Vojvodina to Hungary are young specialists (IT specialists, programmers, engineers, investors, and microbiologists, professionals with PhD degrees, medical workers, artists and sportsmen) who have mastered or can master foreign languages and have capital as well. Vojvodina faces serious disadvantages as a result of a “brain drain” and the migration of businessmen and their capital. The results of empirical research obtained among young Hungarian intellectuals from Vojvodina support their high mobility, as they show that the young people believe that they will find job much easier abroad than in Vojvodina [Szlávity 2005: 70]

According to the analysis of Gábrity Molnár [2008], the most important emigration types from Vojvodina to Hungary from 1990 until today according to the length of migrant stays are the following:

a) *Temporary foreign employment* – Employment targeted migration to the West has been officially registered by the Yugoslav authorities about half a century ago [Grečić 2001]. Even today, the most highly qualified employees

work abroad during the whole year (generally with their families) and return to their home country only occasionally, i.e. visiting their relatives two or three times per year. They usually maintain their foreign status for as long as they have their jobs but it is also possible that this group of people will return only after Serbia's admission to the EU or after the significant improvement of the economic situation in Serbia.

b) Entrepreneurs, businessmen – At the end of the 1980s, a small number of enterprise-oriented private tradesmen, privately-owned small factories and suppliers appeared in Yugoslavia and its province, Vojvodina. The nature of their business activities resulted in the establishment of various relationships with foreign business partners. Groups of new businessmen have tried to launch enterprises during the years of economic and political crisis of 1990s. Entrepreneurs of a new class in Serbia try to benefit from cross-border economic opportunities. The average life cycle of these firms is usually short. They are characterized by perpetually travelling businessmen and managers, but the business activity of this segment is very diverse.

c) The economic emigration of the unemployed people – During the 1990s, the “technological labour excess” of state firms became the new unemployed population, who tried to look for jobs abroad. They tried to find jobs in the more developed European states that reflected their qualifications. Alongside this group of unemployed, surplus agricultural workers also went abroad to find seasonal work.

d) Daily or weekly cross-border commuters – Following the Second World War, especially from 1960s, rapid industrialization resulted in intensive internal migration (people commuted between villages and towns). Later (from the 1990s) Vojvodinian people who lived near the border started commuting to their schools or workplaces on a daily or weekly basis to Hungarian towns. This resulted in periodical, but permanent commuting and absence from their home country. There were mainly construction and industrial workers who travelled home every 2nd or 3rd month, secondary school and university students who commuted on a week-basis but also smugglers who commuted daily.

TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE SERBIAN-HUNGARIAN CROSS-BORDER REGION

The cross-border contacts in the last century were always present, in spite of political and historical changes. Only their intensity, political charge and tension have been changing. The asymmetries defining the border region have been reflected in different directions, time and intensity.

Between both sides of Hungarian-Serbian cross-border region there are numerous historical, cultural and economic relations, which contribute to the shaping and intensifying of transnational networks (Hungary–Serbia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007– 2013). Potential migrants from Serbia to Hungary have a possibility to inform about the economic situation in Hungary, about its laws, educational system, investment potentials etc. The development of transnational relations contributes to the intensification of

economic, cultural, educational cooperation and to the exchange of material and human resources between Serbia and Hungary.

Hungary was a popular destination for Serbian citizens at the time of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, too. Between 1988 and 1999, about 155,000 refugees arrived to Hungary [Tóth 2001]. About 30% of the immigrants were Hungarians. Between 1991 and 1993, mostly intellectuals, physical workers and students migrated from Serbia [Gábrity Molnár 2001].

Regarding the EU membership of Hungary (from 2004), an intensifying trend of migrations of young educated people from Serbia, especially among Hungarians from Vojvodina to the neighbouring country, has emerged [Takács, 2013: 36]. The emigration of Hungarians from Vojvodina to Hungary (to the motherland) has economic motives, but it is considered to be ethnic migration. If these emigrants from Vojvodina to Hungary move off from Hungary in a short time period to other developed market economies, it is considered to be transnational migration [Tátrai *et al.* 2013].

Over the last years, in the Serbian-Hungarian border region, regarding the periodical emigration processes, the mass appearance of women has become relevant. Men dominate among international circular migrants which is also true for those Vojvodinian men who leave Hungary and migrate to the West [Takács and Gábrity Molnár 2012]. Nowadays, the vast majorities of circular migrants are single people (53.6%), and are mostly 25–54 years old. Labour mobility is the overwhelming part of cycles of repeated migration, and many of migrants are involved in one or more systems of emigration and return. It can be inferred that the female age composition was younger than the male counterpart. We can hypothesize with high probabilities that women started their immigration careers to Hungary earlier than men [Gábrity Molnár and Illés 2012].

Based on the analysis of Gábrity Molnár and Illés [2012] about the migration processes in the Serbian-Hungarian cross-border region, it can be concluded that the most recent types of emigrants from Vojvodina are as follows:

A) By status:

1. Settlers (with dual citizenship),
2. Circulars and seasonal migrants,
3. Pendulum migrants (from 3 months to 1 year),
4. Students (secondary and third level),
5. Refugees and asylum seekers.

B) By the causes and purposes of migration:

1. Migrant physical workers,
2. Creative class: entrepreneurs, businessmen, international traders (between the continuum of settlers and circulars),
3. Investors and career builders (brain drain, brain gain, brain circulation),
4. Family unification or reunification (marriage as family formation and, for instance, retirement movement as family reunification),
5. Applicants for citizenship,
6. Recreational migrant-tourists.

According to the research data of Gábrity Molnár [2010] the most emblematic periods of Serbian citizens who immigrated to Hungary between 1989 and 2010 are the following:

- a) Before the 1990s wars (between 1989 and 1991) Hungarians from Vojvodina were not refugees, but migrating *guest workers*. Hungary often served only as a transitional country for further migration to more developed capitalist countries in hope of well-paid work possibilities.
- b) At the beginning of the wars and hyperinflation (1992–93) mostly *entrepreneurs* left the country (their estimated number in Hungary is approximately 500). This group established small and medium-sized private companies (e.g. limited companies) with a positional advantage (having the capital). Most of these companies belong to the tertiary sector.
- c) *Economic emigrants* and refugees who left Serbia as a result of fear from the wars (1991–95) had less capital. Their estimated number including their families was more than 10,000. They had to rely on their domestic relationships from the country of origin and also to find a job with the help and support of their domestic relationships (black marketers). The migrants belonging to this group rarely sold their properties, maintaining the possibility of return. They usually chose seasonal high-paid jobs. Some of them are “refugee entrepreneurs”.
- d) From 1990, there was a group of *students* among those who immigrated to Hungary (hundreds of secondary school and university students who generally stay abroad having finished their educational career). In 2010, about 1,400 young people, a half of the Vojvodinian Hungarian students, were studying in Hungary.¹

“The analysis of spatial distribution of all immigrants to Hungary shows that they are concentrated in two typical areas in Hungary. Firstly, about 60% of them live in Budapest and its surroundings. Budapest and Pest County is generally the migration centre of Hungary. The others have settled in areas close to the Hungarian side of the Hungarian-Serbian border (Csongrád County and Bács-Kiskun County), where the proximity of the border is a contact zone from the aspect of migration flows. They usually become frequent commuters or self-employed/entrepreneurs” [Gábrity Molnár and Illés 2012].

THE EFFECTS OF CROSS-BORDER EMIGRATION FROM SERBIA TO HUNGARY

The intensive (though one-directional) migration processes in the analyzed period (the last two decades) from Serbia to Hungary need to be reflected from economic and social aspects both in Serbia and Hungary.

In Hungary, the cross-border migration had mostly positive effects. In the period between 1991 and 1999, the number of foreign-interested, especially

¹ We notice that since the possibility of acquiring Hungarian citizenship (2011), one-third of Vojvodina Hungarians applied for *dual citizenship*. The goal of those Hungarians in their active years is not to relocate to the mainland, but to travel and work in the EU.

small entrepreneurships, has quadrupled [Szónokyné 2001]. “There are chronological data about the industry’s export-orientation of the country according to which the export ratio of industrial sales between 1994 and 2002 had significantly raised, almost doubled (from 27.7% to 55.1%). The increase of export-orientation characterized all regions; however, differences in ratio can be noticed. In 2002 the two most typical export-oriented regions of Hungary (where the export ratio was higher than 70%) were West and Central Transdanubia. The lowest rate of industrial sale was noted in the South Plain” [Antalóczy and Sass 2005]. In Hungary, the density of foreign entrepreneurships in 1999 was 2.6% (the ratio of foreign entrepreneurships in comparison to registered ones), while in the South Plain region it was only 1.9%. However, Csongrád County exceeded the country’s average, the ratio there was 2.9%. The reason for this is the fact that about 70% of Yugoslav companies were founded in this region (44% of them in Csongrád County). After 1996, the number of Yugoslav firms decreased by 10% in Bács-Kiskun County, while it rose by 32% in Csongrád County [CD Cég hírek, 1999]. The territorial movements of Yugoslav entrepreneurships regarding their economic innovative spread describe two directions: a spread along the municipalities along the border to the cross-border municipalities and to the towns in Hungary (Szeged, Kecskemét, Budapest), thereby significantly influencing the economic activities of the municipalities in the cross-border region [Szónokyné 2001].

According to Szónokyné [2001] entrepreneurial types of Vojvodinian Hungarians emigrating to Hungary, refugee-businessmen who moved to Hungary can be classified as follows:

1. Successful *small and medium-sized entrepreneurships* became foreign subcontractors who were experienced and had invested available capital (money, capital, machines that they could take over the border without paying duty). The target settlement of refugee-businessmen was usually the nearest cross-border municipality or Szeged.
2. Many *fictive companies* were founded in the region in order to obtain work permits, property purchase rights or a residential permit.
3. Hungarians from Vojvodina established *family companies* in villages along the border. These were mostly small factories employing not more than ten employees.

Considering the emigration from Serbia to Hungary, educational migration is one of the most important types of cross-border movements. From 1990s, many Hungarian families from Serbia have decided that after finishing primary school in Serbia, their children should pursue their secondary and tertiary education in Hungary.

According to the authors’ opinion, mass emigration from Vojvodina to foreign countries has almost only negative economic, social and psychological consequences to the country of origin. The economic migration of the population caused damage to both society and economy at different levels:

1. Lack of experts, human capital loss causing serious economic deficit (withdrawal, lack of repayment of investment in education/qualifications).

On the basis of empirical indicators, Grečić [2002] estimates that the exodus of citizens holding university degrees is probably over 30,000.

2. Demographic crisis (decrease of the population, desertion of villages, decrease in birth rate, decrease of the number of marriages, increase of the number of divorces, etc.)
3. The powerlessness of Vojvodina (the lack of developmental potential and innovation).

The negative effect of economic emigration to Hungary is reflected in the Serbian labour market. The result of the move-off of qualified people and entrepreneurs from Serbia to Hungary is that the qualifications of those who work abroad are higher than that of those who work in Serbia. One element of the damage is the financial loss, resulting from the absence of those experts whose education was paid by the state. At the same time, the rhythm and quality of economic development of Serbia has slowed down. This is because the countries of high emigration to a great degree depend on foreign capital investments that they spend on the replacement of the experts missing from the labour force. Labour market competition will also be weak since positions that should be occupied by experts are filled in by a less qualified workforce. The emigration of highly educated, active, enterprising population segments has a negative effect on the home country. Even if it can decrease the level of unemployment, it surely cannot compensate the loss regarding the investment in the education of those who left the country [Gábrity Molnár 2001:132].

The positive effects of the cross-border migration between Serbia and Hungary are the social, communicational and cultural aspects. The cross-border lifestyle opens new communicational channels bringing closer different social segments. In the emigrants, the local and national identity is weakening, and beside the new regional identity, a special European identity is evolving, too. Sometimes it can lead to de-territorialisation, i.e. the migrants can break away from their homeland and even from the new territory where they have found temporary living place. They are not attached to those places and can easily move away. It is especially relevant among young cross-border commuters and circular migrants. They are usually highly qualified professionals speaking several foreign languages following the modern lifestyle, having experience in living abroad through student exchange programmes or short periods of working abroad, so the spectrum of potential target countries is becoming broader [Gábrity 2013: 124].

CONCLUSIONS

From the 1990s up to this day, the different migrant groups of Serbian citizens (e.g. commuters, students, circulars and seasonal migrants, etc.) in the Serbian-Hungarian border region play a specific role in forming transnational networks and transnational spaces. The everyday activities of the people as well as their mobility, emotional attachments, and economic relations have contributed to the formation of a transnational region, using their material, cultural, social and symbolic capital in various ways.

The empirical research data prove that in the last 25 years, economic reasons were the main causes of emigration from Vojvodina to Hungary. The main positive effect of this process for Serbia is the decline in the number of unemployed people, while the negative effect is regarding the human capital loss in the country of origin.

In this specially built and constantly reorganizing scope of Serbian-Hungarian cross-border region, people living their everyday life have tried to use the asymmetries for their benefit, and to improve their possibilities. With their transnational lifestyles and cross-border networks, they substantially contribute to the stability and prosperity of the cross-border region.

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УТИЦАЈ МИГРАЦИЈЕ ИЗ СРБИЈЕ У МАЂАРСКУ
НА ЉУДСКЕ РЕСУРСЕ ВОЈВОДИНЕИРЕН ГАБРИЋ МОЛНАР
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РЕЗИМЕ: У последњим декадама миграциони процеси између Србије и Мађарске постају све интензивнији и комплекснији. Нови тип миграције између две земље је етничка и транснационална међународна миграција. Тражење посла на међународном тржишту рада, миграција стручњака, двојно држављанство и више-струки идентитет, власништво над покретном и непокретном имовином и потрошња у оригиналном и новом месту боравка доводе до новог начина живота. Након системских промена политичког режима 90-их година 20. века у бившој Југославији и Мађарској појављују се нови типови миграната, као што су висококвалификовани стручњаци, студенти, предузетници, старији који одлазе код своје деце и циркуларни мигранти. Најновији типови миграната на подручју пограничне регије између Србије и Мађарске су економски мигранти: физички радници, креативни слојеви (предузетници, бизнисмени, међународни трговци), циркуларни и сезонски мигранти, као и студенти.

Циљ аутора је да у раду анализирају мотиве емиграције војвођанских Мађара у Мађарску. Резултати истраживања спроведених међу држављанима Србије који живе у Мађарској показују да је главни мотив емиграције економске природе – потрага за послом у Мађарској, или касније у другим развијеним земљама Европске уније.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: емиграција, мотиви емиграције, Војводина, Мађарска