

# INTEGRATION OF SLOVENES FROM ARGENTINA INTO THE NOSTALGIC ANCESTORS' LAND AND THE SLOVENE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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## ABSTRACT

### *Integration of Slovenes from Argentina into the Nostalgic Ancestors' Land and the Slovene Working Environment*

This article identifies the key challenges that people of Slovenian origin encounter in the field of personal and professional life upon moving to Slovenia. The aim of the article is to identify the key problematic areas when Argentinian Slovenes enter the labour market in Slovenia and the advantages that their integration into the Slovene working environment brings to the Slovenian economy. The article presents the results of a qualitative research approach. The article makes recommendations for creating more effective synergies between Argentinian Slovenes and employers in Slovenia.

**KEY WORDS:** Slovenes, labour market, organizational culture, migration, change management

## IZVLEČEK

### *Integracija Slovencev iz Argentine v nostalgичno deželno prednikov in slovensko delovno okolje*

Avtorica v članku, ki je utemeljen na kvalitativni raziskovalni metodi, identificira ključne izzive, s katerimi se ljudje slovenskih korenin po nastanitvi v Sloveniji soočajo tako na osebni kot profesionalni ravni. Še zlasti se posveča njihovim težavam pri zaposlovanju in na delovnih mestih, utemelji pa tudi prednosti, ki jih njihova integracija vnaša v slovensko delovno okolje. Na koncu podaja priporočila za ustvarjanje učinkovitih sinergij med argentinskimi Slovenci in slovenskimi zaposlovalci.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Slovenci, trg dela, kultura organizacije, migracija, management sprememb

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## INTRODUCTION

The working environment is challenging, and even more so when faced with the additional component of a cultural shift. Benson (2015) argues for the need to research how lifestyle migration research is connected to other areas of the social science research. In this article I am therefore interested to find out what kind of specifics Slovenes coming from Argentina experience in the Slovene working environment. Migration policy remains under the jurisdiction of national policies and at the level of EU countries which have set guidelines (Lukšič Hacin 2005). Migration studies are interdisciplinary and there is a trend towards making them an independent scientific subject (Lukšič Hacin 2010).

Cultural differences often serve as an argument for rejecting the co-existence or mixing of different ethnical groups or individuals (Kralj 2008). Slovene media and political representatives used discriminatory discursive practices (ibid.) in the period of the so-called immigration crisis in 2000 and 2001, where the dominant thesis was one in which "Slovenianness" was threatened by the arrival of foreigners (i.e. "illegal" immigrants). The period between 2000–2003 was also the time when around 150 families of Slovene origin came from Argentina (Kocmur 2017b). Slovenia has provisions on repatriation in its Act which formally regulates the relations of Slovenia and its diaspora.

When people of Slovene origin come to Slovenia from abroad they perceive new experiences differently than foreigners do. They are familiar with Slovene customs; however, experiences gained abroad build identity and can cause adjustment challenges. Valentinčič (2016b) identified micro cases from the USA and Canada in which people were returning to their Slovene roots as personal projects in the context of the global trend of individualization.

My research aim is to investigate how Slovenes from Argentina are integrated into the Slovene working environment. Therefore, Slovenes from Argentina are a unique group of individuals to be researched, as migration studies usually research foreigners arriving in a new environment, whereas in the case of Slovenes from Argentina, they have experienced both the Argentinian and Slovene environments. Specifics appear if they come after studying or working abroad.

The research questions of this article examine migration studies at a micro level and also connect economic and sociological perspectives in its research aim firstly by researching what happens after people arrive in a new environment (Lukšič Hacin 2010: 9; Genov 2015: 18), i.e. what do Slovenes from Argentina experience when they integrate into the Slovene working environment?, and secondly by researching why people decide to migrate and under what conditions (Lukšič Hacin 2010: 9), i.e. why did people decide to come to Slovenia after years in Argentina, and how did they search for and obtain employment in the Slovene working environment?

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Migration (Klinar in Lukšič Hacin 2010: 11) entails rational and emotional elements that need to be considered when researching migrations. There are several factors of attraction (ibid.: 10): economic prosperity, raising of living standards, higher income, professional promotion, appropriate employment and education. The main reason for moving is an imbalance between the existing state and an individual's aspirations. The larger the imbalance, the higher the probability for migration (ibid.: 11). Three intensive waves of return migration were identified (Lukšič Hacin 2002): at the end of the seventies, in the nineties, and at present.

There were also three main waves of Slovene emigration to Argentina: the first one, in the second half of the 19th century, was relatively small, just a couple hundred people. Between the years 1920–1930 about 30,000 Slovenes moved to Argentina (mostly from Primorska, but also from Prekmurje and Bela Krajina). About 6,000 people emigrated to Argentina after the Second World War (Repič 2012). A lot of people from the Friuli region (Kalc, Predan and Petricig 2011: 9) left for Argentina, Brazil and other South American countries. They moved to Argentina between the wars and after the Second World War because of the anti-Slovenian polices in that region and economic underdevelopment (Banchig 2013: 344). But most of these people did not join Slovenian societies in Argentina, due to their complex and unclear identities (Valentinčič 2016a). Those that returned did not move to Slovenia but to the Veneto or Resia regions in Italy. According to the data of the "Slovenska kronika 20. stoletja" [Slovene Chronicle of the 20th Century] in the magazine *Nova revija*, 25,000 Slovenes moved to Argentina before the Second World War, 22,000 of whom were from the Primorska region (Vogel 2005: 6). On the basis of various estimates and documentation in different periods from 1950 on, approximately 30,000 people (Žigon 1999: 21) moved to Argentina from a Slovene ethnic environment. There is above-average preservation of ethnic identity among Slovene political emigrants in Argentina (Žigon 2001a). The ethnic identity of Argentinian Slovenes is in decline due to the loss of Slovene language amongst the younger generation of Argentinian Slovenes (Rihar 2017). The decline is much more visible now because this community has preserved its Slovene identity much more than any other Slovene diaspora. Most of the descendants of Slovene emigrants from the 19th century and between the two world wars lost the Slovene language years ago and are much more assimilated.

An exhibition at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana (Vogel 2005) presented the people who came to Slovenia from Argentina and identified three main themes, the first of which was the moving of the Faculty of Theology to Ljubljana. Until 1948, priests and students at the Faculty of Theology together with certain members of the intellectual elite moved out of Slovenia and lived in Europe and then in Argentina, first in San Luis and then in Adroque. The Christian seminary functioned there until 1959 and educated around 70 priests. Amongst the last priests educated there were Edo Škulj, PhD (musicologist) and Marjan Bečan (working among

Slovenes in Munich). When it stopped functioning, future priests studied in Ljubljana, such as Poznič, Burja, Bidovec, Cukjati, Jan, Opeka, Novak etc. In 1991 the Faculty of Theology again became a part of the University of Ljubljana as a founding member that was expelled from public education after the war (Rihar 2017).

The two other factors identified as giving impetus to the return to Slovenia were Slovenia's gaining of independence and the economic crisis in Argentina (Vogel 2005: 6; Valentinčič 2017). The exhibition focused on the preservation of the stereotypical representation of Slovenia in the memories of many Slovenes in Argentina and its transferral to the younger generations (Vogel 2005: 6).

After Slovenia gained independence, the "Slovene political emigrants came into 'contact' with the homeland as it was before they were 'cut off' (self-isolated) from the native country" (Žigon 2001b: 37). During the crisis in Argentina, the people who returned to Slovenia were not "cultural pillars" of the Slovene community in Argentina (Valentinčič 2017). However nowadays he sees the trend of returning Argentinian Slovenes who helped build the cultural environment in the Slovene community in Argentina. This is why an emphasis is placed on conducting research within the community of people coming to Slovenia from Argentina. In every society (diaspora) there are people who do not get involved in the life of the community and others who deactivate at some period of their life. Global trends (globalization, fluidity of societies, individualization etc.) have a major influence on diaspora communities. Individualization in particular has a major influence on the possibilities to return to the "home country" – since individualization (Beck, Beck Gernsheim 2002) is closely connected with de-traditionalization and community spirit (both can also cause the opposite changes within an individual).

Researchers of remigration, as well as Slovene political and public discourse, have explored various aspects of returning from abroad (Toplak 2004). However, in most cases they have avoided problematizing the life of individuals after their return to the country of origin. The first and only valid research of remigration of Slovenes was conducted in the second half of the nineteen-seventies (ibid.). Remigration is also associated with difficulties that an individual needs to overcome with the support of the remigration policy (ibid.). Due to stereotypes and negative perceptions of immigrants among Slovenes, there is a tendency to blend into the dominant cultural patterns and hide one's uniqueness (Žitnik 2006a).

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative analysis (Bryman 2004; Colville, Brown, Pye 2011; Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias 2008; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill 2009) of empirical data was carried out on data gathered in 2015 through a survey consisting of open-ended questions on a sample of Slovenes from Argentina, as well as expert interviews carried out in 2017. I introduce the results gathered through the survey (Čikić 2002) where the

Government Office for Slovenians Abroad, European Parliament Information Office in Slovenia, the Rafael and Slovenia in the World societies helped in identifying the key participants. The questionnaire was specifically focused on reaching Slovenes from Argentina.

In order to triangulate the data I also carried out 3 expert interviews (with Boštjan Kocmur, president of the Slovenia in the World society; legal expert Dejan Valentinčič, PhD candidate in migration studies; and Lenart Rihar, president of the Rafael Society)<sup>1</sup> in 2017. I also conducted a survey of articles dealing with Slovenes in Argentina and coming from Argentina to Slovenia in the magazines *Slovenija.svet* and *Moja Slovenija* from 2005 onwards. In doing so I wanted to get hands-on experience of the people who supported their integration into the working environment. The article focuses on the perspective of the people who moved from Argentina to Slovenia as well as the perspective of the people who assisted them in their process.

The benefits of process-oriented qualitative research lie in the acknowledging of the interpretative nature of the understanding of the meaning and providing insight into the context of a phenomenon (Maxwell 2004: 8). I have undertaken a qualitative research approach (Creswell 1998; Creswell 2003) in order to answer the research questions and grasp the perspectives and meanings of research participants as authentically as possible. The qualitative findings are tied to the specific context (Patton in Boeije 2010), and therefore I focused my attention on understanding and highlighting important cases instead of generalizing from the sample to the population.

The field of economics has traditionally approached research questions on migration with an intention to explain the tendency to migrate and what the effects are on migrations through hypotheses focusing on human capital (Lukšič Hacin 2010: 22). I expand this focus by adding social capital (consideration of the sociological perspective), because I consider the topic of (re)integration to be interdisciplinary in nature.

In order to understand remigration experiences, (Lukšič Hacin 2006) a combination of written sources and life stories (Mlekuž 2006) offers insight into individual remigration experiences from different perspectives (Milharčič Hladnik 2005). I have analyzed the archives of the magazines *Moja Slovenija* and *Slovenija.svet* from 2005 onwards in order to investigate the topic of Argentinians with Slovene roots coming

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1 Expert interviews conducted: 1) Kocmur, Boštjan (2017a). Supporting Slovenes from Argentina in finding a job in Slovenia through the Slovenia in the World society (expert phone interview). Faculty of Economics University of Ljubljana: 30 January 2017; 2) Kocmur, Boštjan (2017b). Supporting Slovenes from Argentina in finding a job in Slovenia through the Slovenia in the World society \ (expert interview). *Slovenija v svetu*, Štula 23, 1210 Ljubljana Šentvid: 2 February 2017; 3) Rihar, Lenart (2017). Triangulation of the findings (expert interview). Kapitelj Gallery: 9 February 2017; and 4) Valentinčič, Dejan (2017). Legal perspective on integration into the working environment: researching challenges and benefits for Slovenia and Slovene Argentinians (expert interview via Skype). University of Ljubljana Faculty of Economics: 2 February 2017.

to Slovenia. My aim was to complement the primary sources and triangulate them with an analysis of the secondary sources. This way, individuals are no longer considered as a uniform group but instead as individuals who make different personal decisions in various circumstances (Milharčič Hladnik 2005). The demographic data of the survey sample (number of participants: 11) that was conducted via the survey platform 1ka through snowball sampling in 2015 is presented in Table 1. I targeted societies where Argentinians with Slovene roots were part of the community

Sample	Gender	Work status	Education	Age
	5 Males; 6 Females	10 active; 1 pregnant and writing diploma thesis	Higher education level: 7; Master's level: 4	21–40: 7; 41–60: 4

## RESULTS

The Argentinian community of Slovenes from the third wave of Slovene emigration to Argentina (and their descendants) is very strong in terms of preserving their ethnic identity from the Slovenian cultural point of view. However, these cultural patterns have remained quite rigid:

These kids stumble into kindergarten and school with hardly any Spanish words and almost know more about Slovenia than Argentina. And yet, they might actually never have seen, felt or smelt this country called Slovenia. They grew up in a culture that is not present around them – actually it is nowhere to be found any more as it is composed of patterns which their parents brought with them and which remained preserved for many decades. (Žigon 1998: 10)

Contact of the Argentinian community of Slovenes from the third wave of Slovene emigration to Argentina (and their descendants) with Slovenia has increased since Slovenia gained independence, and the wish to see and experience Slovenia has risen among younger generations of Slovenes raised in Argentina: "I would love to go to Slovenia to personally see and experience the country which I so far have only seen photos of, heard stories about life there or read about it. Yes, there over the sea is my second homeland, Slovenia" (Sandra Jerončič in Žigon 1998: 221). A secondary-school student from Bariloche (Eiletz 2010: 3) described her experience of visiting Slovenia for the first time: "This experience helped me to know the culture from a different viewpoint and see how people actually live. [...] I am sure that I will come back again to the land where my great-grandparents lived." The question that arises is: How can people who never left return? (Milharčič Hladnik, 23 Jan. 2017,

personal email communication) An emotional connection with Slovenia was permanently present in the Slovene community in Argentina and concern for Slovenia was stronger than for Argentina (Kocmur 2017b).

The children of the people who moved from Argentina to Slovenia experience that their parents who came to Slovenia from Argentina are different. "You are Argentinian. This is different in Slovenia than what you think" (ibid.). Many assumptions are tested when people of Slovenian origin actually come to Slovenia from Slovene communities in Argentina. Many of the old traditions are no longer in place, and this represents a shift of the core identity of what is Slovenia and "who am I?" People who moved from Argentina to Slovenia noticed that they had arrived in a different "home" space and they needed time to become acclimatized all over again. It should be mentioned that there were also cases of Slovenes coming from Argentina who did not succeed in integrating into the Slovene labour market and returned to Argentina. There are also returnees from other countries who have had difficulties with reintegration after their return to Slovenia, and that is why they have founded the Lastovka [Swallow] society to help them with integration.

When asked about the Slovene community in Cordoba (Argentina), Anton Govednik stated that "We cannot speak of brilliant successes today anymore, with the exception of the fact that we achieved the main purpose of the Edinost [Unity] society, which was to remain Slovenes in our far away new homeland" (Rogelj 2009: 20). Slovenes lived in Argentina with Slovenia at their side (Rihar 2017).

Some Argentinian Slovenes, however, decided to move to Slovenia permanently, and this article presents their main experiential perceptions of their arrival and adaptation to the labour market in Slovenia. The idea to move to Slovenia permanently grew for a long time and was strengthened by visits to Argentina by relatives and friends from Slovenia, who also became their main sources of help and support upon their arrival in Slovenia (Batagelj in Jakin 2006a: 27).

The economic situation in Slovenia in 2000–2003 was open to newcomers, as there were jobs available, and Argentinian Slovenes were also prepared to start working in different sectors, therefore they found employment quite quickly (Kocmur 2017b). The most common obstacles in the first years of immigration to Slovenia from Argentina were long waiting lines for arranging documents, recognition of diplomas, documentation of permanent residence and obtaining scholarships for Slovene citizens older than 26 (Kocmur in Jakin 2006c: 7).

The Slovenia in the World society provided people who had returned from Argentina to Slovenia with legal advice and cultural adjustment. In the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 the main streams of people moving from Argentina to Slovenia due to the economic crisis in Argentina tried to solve their existential situation by seeking jobs in Slovenia. As quite a lot of these people were in mixed marriages, Mr Kocmur (30 January 2017a) stated that finding a job was not the main issue, as their spouses and children first needed to learn Slovene and it was difficult in those years to find the resources to organize Slovene language courses. This is why they organized a course

in the early stage with the help of supporters and donors. Now there are European funds available since Slovenia is in the European Union.

Both women and men sought employment; only women with large families stayed at home. Also, finding accommodations represented a challenge. This was expressed by Emil Urbančič, (Jakin 2006b: 27) who stated that the decision to come to Slovenia was not easy, especially as his wife Tantely had to wait five months to get permission to enter Slovenia and also had difficulties with the Slovene language in the beginning.<sup>2</sup>

Argentinian Slovenes value the following characteristics the most about the Slovene working environment: order, reliability and knowing what to expect in the working environment. I analyzed the reasons for seeking employment and based on their responses found the following main themes as causes for their return:

Because of the crisis in Argentina in 2001. It repeats every decade. I did not want to experience such economic crises any more. / I've created a family. / My life evolved like this. / When I moved to Slovenia I was still underage. / I am an entrepreneur, I was not looking for jobs. / Because I wanted to stay here for a little longer, and to understand life in Slovenia better. / Because I am a Slovene, born in Argentina. I moved when Slovenia gained independence. / I didn't come to Slovenia for a job, but because of the desire to live in the land of my ancestors. Since I moved to Slovenia, I had to find a job in order to earn a living. / I have Slovene roots. / Due to the desire to return to the homeland of my ancestors and due to the current crime situation in Argentina. / I came to Slovenia to study, which is why employment in Slovenia at the end of my studies was a logical consequence. It was not my intention to return to Argentina.

The reasons to move to Slovenia from Argentina can be broken down as follows: 1) returning to one's "roots"; 2) seeking a safe environment for raising a family; 3) seeking a better quality of life; and 4) seeking business opportunities. Based on the answers received, it can be summarized that the reasons for returning are mainly connected to the personal, social dimension of human existence, which is closely connected with finding employment and which affects the duration and satisfaction with one's decision to stay in a certain country.

I was curious to understand the process of adjustment and integration of people who had entered the Slovene working environment once they had settled in Slovenia. I based my findings on the following quotations from the research participants:

The adaption process was very brief, because I came at a time when the company has the most work. My colleagues were all willing to help when I needed anything,

2 Beck, Beck Gernsheim (2002: 92) state that bi-national or bicultural couples have increased considerably in recent times due to migration of labour, political upheavals, mass tourism and foreign travel for education or business.



so I felt accepted. / I work in education. I also worked in education in Argentina. I lacked some technical terminology and of course I needed to adapt to different situations and habits. / I was lucky. Before I graduated I sent a request to the company where I am currently employed. They invited me for an interview and I passed it successfully. Now I have been working for four years. I had no problems adapting in cultural terms. The problems I had were probably unconnected with the fact that I am from Argentina, but more due to personal reasons. / Somehow I always remain a stranger, thinking differently, perceiving others differently. For many people around me, it is often too different. Adaptation is still ongoing. / Although I went to a couple of job interviews, I didn't get a job through ads, but through an acquaintance. At the interviews the people were surprised that I spoke Slovene. They were worried that since I was not educated in Slovenia I do not know the laws, regulations, etc. I got my job through an acquaintance, who introduced me to an acquaintance of his. They told me that they would like to see what I can do and told me to come the next day. They gave me a few things to do and were satisfied with my work. During the integration process my biggest help were great bosses that saw potential in me and also others in the organization. They created a supportive and good working atmosphere. / I was underage upon arrival. / The process was fast: my colleagues all accepted me positively. The adaptation process has been long (in spite of my knowledge of the Slovene language, I needed some time to express exactly what I think, and I did not have the professional vocabulary). This was my first year. Today, after 12 years, it is still noticeable that I am a foreigner. / They accepted me quickly, only one interview was needed. Adapting took a couple of weeks through conversation with colleagues, their advice, observations. / I wasn't looking for a job. / I had no problems. / They accepted me well, probably because I am a foreigner and because I did not criticize their way of employing (they accepted me only as an independent contractor with an 8-hour working time). They avoid employing people full time as they state directly that this is a major cost for them. I do not feel appreciated. During the integration process what helped me the most was the fact that I had student status, and the friendliness of the staff.

The adaptation process did not present any major systematic challenges to the research participants. Among the challenging adaptation factors they noted the necessity to become accustomed to different working habits and also personal adaptation challenges.

Slovenia is represented in the minds of Argentinian Slovenes in many different layers (Rihar 2017). The younger generation has knowledge about Slovenia but they do not have in-depth knowledge about what brought their ancestors from Slovenia to Argentina. People with Slovene roots in Argentina know things about Slovenia in terms of its integration into the European Union and the European mentality, and expect to experience life as it is represented on television about Western Europe,

but Slovenia is below the EU average in terms of development, although it is still economically more stable than Argentina (ibid.). People with Slovene roots who come from Argentina appreciate the following values in the Slovene working environment: 1) being on time; 2) tidiness, relaxedness; 3) In Slovenia, people still work quite hard. Diligence has not disappeared from the Slovene character, even if the Yugoslavian spirit did influence it. I perceive less laziness than in Argentina. In Slovenia formal processes are quite common and prevalent: order is important which is not the case in Argentina. I think German countries have an even larger emphasis on formalities and processes. 4) punctuality, seriousness; 5) hard work, reliability; 6) order, discipline; 7) stability; 8) diligence, accuracy, responsibility; 9) diligence, honesty (in some); 10) conscientiousness; 11) well-organized work. The findings support the fact that (re)migration is composed of complex family decisions and is much more than just a consequence of socio-economic and legal circumstances (Milharčič Hladnik 2007).

We can speak of concentric circles of the Slovene community in Argentina (Rihar 2017). Usually the people who move to Slovenia are from the outer circles. The people in the centre of the Slovene community in Argentina mostly did not return as they did not want to leave behind what they built. Some Argentinian Slovenes intentionally work on sending their children to Slovenia (ibid.). Slovenes in Argentina are often entrepreneurial, which is unusual for their local setting in Argentina (ibid.). They are and were hard-working and what they bring to the Slovene working environment is honesty and integrity in combination with pride (ibid.). Key differences between Slovene and foreign work environment were identified in terms of: (1) collegial (Argentina) – formal (Slovenia) relationships; (2) reliability (Slovenia) – unreliability (Argentina); (3) creativity at work (Argentina) – sticking to the boss's orders (Slovenia); and (4) easier cooperation (Argentina) – limited willingness to cooperate (Slovenia). The key differences are highlighted in the following quotations:

Argentinian employees are more resourceful, looking beyond, outside the box. They are therefore less reliable, they are more likely to cheat. A (typical) Slovene keeps his word, is reliable, sturdy in a good way. / Slovenes are more reliable, stick to their word. They are also more hypocritical and dispute the truth. Argentines are more open, easier to cooperate with. But they are also increasingly unreliable. / Working with the Slovenes is more orderly. The relationship is limited to the working environment – as a co-worker. It is hard to establish a bond with your co-workers outside of the working setting. You mostly talk about work. Slovenes are very closed. You cannot get close to them. Working with Argentinians is more relaxed. We also develop friendships. After office hours are traditional (coffee, drinks). / Slovenes are more reliable, but also more competitive. / Slovenes smoke a lot and lose a lot of time on cigarette and coffee breaks. In Argentina, people don't even think about that during working hours. Slovenes stick to the schedule (arrival at work) and to the tasks that they have been assigned. Argentineans are not prompt regarding arrival

to work (strikes, long journeys to work, congestion) but they will remain at work after hours if needed, without protest. Slovenes are obedient and good. They carry out what they are ordered without any (direct) complaining. But usually, they complain at home or with colleagues, secretly. Argentineans directly show and tell with strong temperament when they do not like something and give their opinion (which can be positive criticism or a new idea). / The average Slovene: reliable, seeks to stick to agreements, does not steal, is trustworthy. The average Argentinean: the contrary. / Slovenes are more prompt, timely, responsible, and therefore perhaps a little more impatient. Argentines are more resourceful, especially when it seems that there is no solution. Argentines know how to be more collegial, and Slovenes, if they are, become real friends.

## CONCLUSION

Place memory and place expectation include an individual's past experience and future expectation(s) of attachment to a certain place (Chen, Dwyer and Firth 2014a; 2014b). "Attachment has been defined as an affectional bond or tie between an individual and an attachment figure, which is a basic human need for security" (Bowlby in Chen, Dwyer, Firth 2014b: 829). In the case of Argentinian Slovenes it was demonstrated that the generation returning to Slovenia experiences Slovenia firstly through the memories of their grandparents and parents. Argentinian Slovenes demonstrate a large place attachment to Slovenia, are sometimes nostalgic for the past and how things were, but also demonstrated an enormous love for the country and the development of Slovenia.

"Memorable or life-changing events can also lead to an attachment to a place" (Chen, Dwyer, Firth 2014b: 829), which is especially relevant for our discussion as Argentinian Slovenes have place memory – memories of interaction associated with a place (*ibid.*) are strongly connected through relatives in Slovenia, ancestors' storytelling and their own experiences during short visits. "Place expectation – an individual's expectation of the future experiences perceived as likely to occur in a place" (*ibid.*) is an important dimension for the analysis of the results. Argentinian Slovenes often have expectations of Slovenia that are very high, mixed with nostalgic stories of their ancestors. This dimension plays an important role when deciding to return to Slovenia. For every Argentinian with Slovene roots, moving to Slovenia represents a new beginning. People who have gone through this process recommend a trial visit to Slovenia before the final permanent move to Slovenia (Batagelj in Jakin 2006a: 27).

In terms of typology of the relationship to place (Chen 2015), Argentinian Slovenes share narrative, dependence (on work), spirituality (storytelling from their ancestors), and ideological relationship to place. In terms of place attachment as the degree of the bond (Chen 2015), Argentinian Slovenes display place identity (ancestors' origin), place dependence (finding a way of better living), affective attachment

(fondness for the place and history), social bonding (being Slovene is a higher-order value) and natural bonding (admiring the natural beauty of the country). Finding a job is an important dimension in place expectation, and by gaining access to a job in Slovenia, Argentinian Slovenes are able to strengthen their degree of place attachment to Slovenia.

Theoretical implications: The article states the implicit employment theories of Argentinian Slovenes upon their arrival in and adjustment to Slovenia. Practical implications: The article empowers Slovenes living in Argentina with recent data about professional development in Slovenia by highlighting certain examples in order to gain the benefit of their ideas and creativity and to establish a learning community of stakeholders.

It would be advisable to incorporate modules on work-related legislation and the economic environment in Slovenia into the study visits of secondary-school students, so that young people could be informed of the real economic situation in Slovenia and provided with possibilities for collaboration with or within the Slovene business community. This would have synergetic effects for both Argentinian Slovenes and the Slovene business community. Upon the completion of secondary school this is usually the first real contact with Slovenia for many Argentinian Slovenes, as until then they had mostly only heard about Slovenia. A methodological recommendation would be to support the reading of autobiographies (Čebulj Sajko 2001). Čebulj Sajko noted that they are an essential source of personal interpretation of historical truth and vitally connected with the identity of the storyteller.

For future research I recommend a study conducted with in-depth interviews and the reading of the autobiographies of Slovenes who have returned to Slovenia from different countries. Another interesting research project would be to investigate the involvement of Slovenes returning from abroad in Slovene cultural life (Žitnik 2006b). We also offer a practical recommendation which is in line with research conducted by Lukšič Hacin (2002), as our research also demonstrates the necessity of thinking about an active state policy that would encourage exchanges between nations and integrate Slovenes around the globe in important social and economic projects with the help of the modern technology (Batič 2003).

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## POVZETEK

### INTEGRACIJA SLOVENCEV IZ ARGENTINE V NOSTALGIČNO DEŽELO PREDNIKOV IN SLOVENSKO DELOVNO OKOLJE

Judita PETERLIN

Avtorica v članku, ki je utemeljen na kvalitativni raziskovalni metodi, identificira ključne izzive, s katerimi se ljudje slovenskih korenin po nastanitvi v Sloveniji soočajo tako na osebni kot profesionalni ravni. Še zlasti se posveča njihovim težavam pri zaposlovanju in na delovnih mestih, utemelji pa tudi prednosti, ki jih njihova integracija vnaša v slovensko delovno okolje.

Po prihodu ljudi slovenskih korenin iz Argentine v Slovenijo so se številne njihove predpostavke znašle pod vprašajem. Ker večina tradicionalnih običajev v Sloveniji ne obstaja več, to zanje pomeni premik identitetnega jedra. Ljudje se morajo zaradi vrnitve v drugačen »dom« prilagoditi in udomačiti. Ekonomska situacija v Sloveniji je bila v obdobju 2000–2003 zaradi dobrih možnosti za zaposlitev odprta za prišleke, pa tudi argentinski Slovenci so bili pripravljeni delati v različnih sektorjih, zato je večina hitro našla zaposlitev. Argentinski Slovenci v slovenskem delovnem okolju najbolj cenijo red, zanesljivost in to, da vedo, kaj lahko pričakujejo. Razloge za njihov prihod v Slovenijo lahko združimo v štiri ključne teme: 1) vrnitev h »koreninam«; 2) iskanje varnega okolja za vzgojo otrok; 3) iskanje boljše kakovosti življenja; in 4) iskanje poslovnih priložnosti.

Proces prilagajanja za sodelujoče v raziskavi ni bil večji sistemski izziv. Med največje izzive so umestili osebne prilagoditvene izzive in prilagoditve različnim delovnim navadam. Na koncu članka so podana priporočila za ustvarjanje učinkovitih sinergij med argentinskimi Slovenci in slovenskimi zaposlovalci.