
**PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF MIGRATION: A STUDY OF MIGRATION IN
KUMANOVO AND GOSTIVAR**

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Abstract: Migration from North Macedonia to Western European countries has become a common thing. The most frequented embassy it's the German Embassy which each day allocates dozens of work visas. This kind of migration, with this intensification, has not been marked from the time the country declared its independence from the former Yugoslavia. Even though migration has been increasing, public and political institutions remain silent, and they have not been undertaking any preventive strategy. Despite the positive signals of improvement of the country's overall situation, such as change of the political course of the new government, the creation of new political environment after the name change and normalization of relations with the neighbors, increased probability for integration in Euro-Atlantic structures, growth of investment potential, the migration wave has not stopped. The phenomenon that is indicative and that we want to emphasize in this paper, is the fact that besides of unemployed people, i.e. people that indeed are in difficult social condition, there are couples already employed that quit their jobs to migrate to Germany. Review of existing literature in migration studies refer to this phenomenon as a migration in pursuit of a better quality of life and it is closely related to psychosocial aspects of migration. While the number of the migrants is increasing this trend should capture academic attention. Through in-depth interviews, media reports and review of literature this study aims to deepen understanding of Kumanovo and Gostivar migrants' experiences from a psychosocial perspective. Findings show that "lifestyle" does play an important role in motivating Macedonian migrants to relocate to Germany whereas there are also many reported cases of returned back to their home country due to disappointment.

Keywords: Migration, North Macedonia, Western European countries, psychosocial aspects, lifestyle, disappointment

1. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF "LIFESTYLE MIGRATION"

Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly attempted to create a definition of lifestyle migration that is vague enough to be applicable to a wide variety of cases, yet specific enough for it to be constructive¹⁰⁵. Benson & O'Reilly define lifestyle migrants as "relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life"¹⁰⁶. According to Benson Osbaldiston lifestyle refers to the way people live their life, typically reflecting attitudes, values or worldviews¹⁰⁷. In short, this argument implies that since it is now up to individuals to construct their own sense of identity, choosing and engaging in an appropriate kind of lifestyle that makes a statement about who one is or wants to be is a central part of contemporary life¹⁰⁸. This type of migration is clearly not motivated by economic hardship or the search for work or some form of financial security. Lifestyle migrants are "relatively affluent individuals moving (...) to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life". It has also been shown that certain factors are consistently associated with what Benson & O'Reilly call "the search for the good life as a comparative project"¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁵ Benson, M. & O'Reilly, K., *Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration*, The Sociological Review, 2009, 57(4), 608-625.

¹⁰⁶ Benson & O'Reilly, *Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration*, The Sociological Review, 2009b, (57[4], 608-625), p.621

¹⁰⁷ Benson, M. & Osbaldiston, N., *Undersanding lifestyle migration, diasporas and citizenship: Theoretical approaches to migration and the quest for a better way of life*, 2014, p.121

¹⁰⁸ Sweetman, P., *Twenty-first century disease? Habitual reflexivity or the reflexive habitus*, The Sociological Review, 2003, [51(4), 528-549. p.529

¹⁰⁹ Benson & O'Reilly, *Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration*, The Sociological Review, 2009, (57[4], 608-625), pp.621, 610

In the post-traditionalist era, social roles are no longer so inflexibly dealt out by the society... Macro-level factors that have enabled the trend of lifestyle migration is the “European political situation, with the opening up of intra-European borders (within the EU) and the relaxed regulations among EU member-states regarding employment and the transfer of personal finances”¹¹⁰.

<p>Motivations for migrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking alternative lifestyles • Escape from individual and community histories • Escape from changing circumstances • The opportunity for self-realization
<p>Lifestyles after migration involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The (re)negotiation of the work–life balance • The pursuit of a good quality of life • Freedom from prior constraints
<p>Fundamental features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiating new lives • Contradictions between expectations and realities • Ambivalence and lifestyle migration • The ongoing quest

* Source: adapted from Benson, M. & O'Reilly, K., Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration. *The Sociological Review*, 2009a, 57(4)

2. MIGRATION INTENSIFICATION IN NORTH MACEDONIA

According to academic Izet Zeqiri “based on studies done on migration, around 560.000 people have migrated from Macedonia from who the vast majority are young people. If we analyze the measures taken for promoting employment and covered by the state budget, from 2005 when the process has begun till now approximately have been spent 77.5 million EUR, whereas the total employment promotion measures through the Employment Agency, the Ohrid Agreement Framework and other employment facilitation programs have totaled 976 million EUR – almost 1 billion EUR spent, which have not created new jobs and more favorable work conditions for young people. This money is a wasted money, which has not provided any effect, and it’s ‘efficiency’ is now seen with the migration of young people”¹¹¹. According to him Western countries want to take the graduated young people from all fields, and thus the country suffers a damage of 500 million EUR within one year because these are the money the country invested in their education.¹¹²

On the other hand, according to Biljana Jovanovska, director of the Employment Agency, the World Bank's statement is true that "the unemployed in Northern Macedonia do not even want to work or seek jobs. Of the 190,000 unemployed, only half of them seek an employment actively. Even when the agency finds a job to the active job seekers they don't appear in the planned interview or reject the job offered. Reasons for doing this are different, i.e. the unemployed say that often they do not fit the job, the turn, the salary etc. ¹¹³". "From the Employment Agency say that through some active measures last year were opened 6373 jobs. Arben Ziberi, vice director of the agency, says that for 'self-employment' are offered from 5 to 10 thousand euros and for "wage subsidy" to small and medium companies are offered 19,000 denars for 3, 6 or 12 months if hiring young people. For the implementation of the operating plan, last year the budget was 17million euros, while this year it is over 18m euros. The fund for the implementation of the operational plan has been increased for 2019 and it aims to create around 8400 jobs¹¹⁴.

In addition to these allegations, according to the data of the Ministry of Administration, during 2018 hundred workers have voluntarily terminated their employment in state institutions and the public sector. During 2018 in state institutions: 524 employees resigned irrevocably; 44 others temporarily paused their employment. During the first trimester of 2019 in the public sector 162 employees resigned irrevocably and three others temporarily paused their work. Over the past year, from the ARMY 100 individuals have dropped out of work: 8 officers, 18 non-commissioned officers, 73 professional soldiers and one civilian staff, while during the first trimester of 2019 from ARMY voluntarily resigned 25 other members: 5 non-commissioned officers and 20 professional

¹¹⁰ Torkington, K, *Defining lifestyle migration*, Dos Algarves, 2010, (Vol. 19, pp. 99-111); pp. 105-104

¹¹¹ Për KlikPlus në tv21, 27 march 2019, ora 22.20

¹¹² tvAlsatsat M 2019-03-30 / 22:18

¹¹³ tvAlsatsat M 2019-04-12

¹¹⁴ tvAlsatsat M 2019-03-17, 15:19

soldiers. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 58 police officers have left their work last year, whereas in the first trimester 14 employees of this Ministry have left. From the country's independence more than 30 thousand citizens have given up Macedonia's citizenship for the purpose of obtaining the citizenship of foreign countries ¹¹⁵. The Association of Specialists and Young Doctors have reported that for eight years, 1200 doctors have left the country. It is emphasized that the number of doctors leaving the country to work in European countries has increased by 20% in recent ¹¹⁶.

For four months, 89 Albanian doctors left Macedonia. "The physician employed either in the clinic or in the general ambulance needs instruments that will make the doctor more successful ", says for KOHA, Nevzat Elezi, chairman of the Albanian Medical Association. By the Albanian Medical Association say that nearly three years ago, the Law on Doctors has been submitted to the Ministry of Health, but is not sent to Parliament for approval. ¹¹⁷

3. MIGRATION FROM GOSTIVAR

Sefer Selimi from the Democracy Lab Organization in Gostivar states: "Only in one month, in the period from mid-July to mid-August, up to 400 young people left Gostivar. The all-outgoing tragedy is brain drain, meaning that besides the ordinary workforce who are fleeing to ensure survival in European countries, we now face an exodus of intellectuals and specially young professionals ".

Enis Miftari, a student and activist from Gostivar, says: "Destructive immoral policies are killing the hope of thousands of young people not only here, but also in Kosovo and Albania." 90% of young people want to leave somewhere, while the 10% who want to stay here are the children of politicians and businessmen. Of 10 friends I had, left only 3, the others have migrated. While before I was speaking against migration, now I have also expressed my willingness to leave the country and I'm following the German language course. We the young people are insecure because we can not provide incomes. When it comes to the ability of an exemplary student to be employed within institutions, the CV is not viewed at all, but the first question that is asked is whether you are with us or with them, and that is painful. Our grandparents and fathers have migrated alone, and today not only youth leave but also adults take their families with them ¹¹⁸. Artan Dalipi, 30 years old, working as a dental technician in North Macedonia, says that he has left "for a better life and a safer future for his child ... It is known that Germany is one of the most stable and developed countries in the world. It's work culture and the level of safety at work is another reason, the possibility for progress ... high standard of life. Life is much fun, activities are numerous for everyone, the place where I am is quiet, the place I have dreamed of ... every flat has its own parks, children's playgrounds ...clean air ... " Mejreme Imeri 29 years old, employed as a dental assistant, says: "Germany will offer me a quiet, more organized life, especially for my child to start studying in a school that meets all the conditions. Also, I see health institutions as more advanced, something that is a need for everyone. Also, what I like is that if you show outstanding skills at work, they will automatically promote you ie you start from zero and they will raise you in correspondence with your capacities. And what's the best Germany provides you with the greatest opportunity at least once a week to pay attention to the family as it should ... to walk with the kids. "

Sara Shehapi, 21 years old student said: " The main thing is that your life will be secured, especially for children, for work, livelihoods and for safety, how much you work that much you get paid - each one has its own level. We work here 10 hours and get paid 10 Euros. Our hospitals have no bandages, let alone anything else." Vanessa Amzai , 21 years old medical nurse, said: " In Macedonia, if you're financially weaker, you will be the last for all things, no will support you, and they will just look how to lower you down. The strongest person is always favored. In Germany expects me a normal life, above all there people are quite equal, respected the same ... you have a schedule when you need to get up and when to sleep, when you need to go shopping, when to go for a walk..." Vjosa Huseini a 36-year-old first cycle teacher said : "In short, I'm leaving because of the mentality here, I've got work, I've got all that I need but I do not have a freedom. There I will only deal with my stuff and no one else. In Germany people look only to their life, people give their time and energy to the family and the child, where in Macedonia we spent all day long in cafes, drinking coffee and dealing with the people problems. I want that when I come from work or when it comes weekend to go out with my child, to talk with them about school, and not listen to others stuff. Here guests call you a week before and ask if they can visit, and in Macedonia people visit you

¹¹⁵ tv Alsat M 07.04.2019 19:00

¹¹⁶ tv21, 28 april 2019, 18.30

¹¹⁷ Gazeta 'Koha', 17 prill 2019: f.1-3

¹¹⁸ tv21, 27 march 2019, 21:30, Exodus of the youth

unplanned whenever they want. I just love my peace and my freedom "¹¹⁹ Sanela Selmani, a student from Gostivar, said: "I am a X-ray technician and I think I will be better there, for a better life. I want to work there, there is work here, but I do not want to work because here wages are very low. For this I decided to go to Germany. Simply there is no prospect here- no future"¹²⁰

In the Municipality of Gostivar the number of pupils in the primary and secondary cycle has significantly decreased in the last three years. As reported by this municipality, in the primary cycle the number of pupils decreased for 138 pupils, whereas for the secondary one for 559 pupils

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4. MIGRATION FROM KUMANOVO

The newspaper Lajm has made several reports in the municipality of Lipkovo: Vaksicë, Shllupçan, Mateçin and other villages where respondents stated that the youth are moving like never before. One disappointed interviewee commented: "How is it possible that a 30 thousand resident municipality has no plant or manufacture. So why we should stay here, for the asphalt, but we cannot eat the road. We will all move. If we had the chance, even we the old people will escape from here" says an elder. "What can we do here, with no salary - with nothing. I've worked for 21 years, they took me off from work, now I've been on the streets"¹²². An elderly person from Llojan, a village in the municipality of Lipkovo stated that "young people from 19 years old no longer want to stay here. A lot of them have gone and are expected to go further more whom they are waiting for a work guarantee. An owner of a cafeteria works by himself in it, because no workers are reported, he requires workers but can not find any. Young people are waiting for visas. "We the elders have been left alone - the youth left us. Many of the homes are closed because they have no one in there." One interviewee who had accompanied his 22-year-old son to Germany declared that about 200 young people had fled last year. Shenai Demiri who had went with his son at the German Embassy was surprised by the large number of young people he had seen waiting for. According to him, 95% of them spoke Albanian language. The Head of the Local Village of Llojan, Selami Memeti, stated that it is very difficult to stop the youth, even added that there are over 100 people who have left the job and have migrated to Germany"¹²³.

Today, in many stores in Kumanovo, both the Albanian and Macedonian ones, in their announcements in the shop windows it writes "we are looking for a worker", which means that there is a lack of workers. The private tyranny that aroused the exploitation and abuse of workers had the effect of many young people leaving out of their country, by not paying their salaries, with the minimum salaries associated with a lack of health and pension insurance. If we continue with this movement of the labor force, in our country will remain only the elderly and inactive persons in the labor market, which will lead to extreme poverty ... In Europe you cannot go with a minimum wage of 12,500 den, and with a standard of living like Switzerland. There is no shortage of staff, but there are small salaries..." - writes Driton Maliqi ¹²⁴. "In my life I have never seen the city so empty ... In primary and secondary schools the number decreases. It is terrible when you hear from teachers that the number of students has fallen in recent years. Going out for a cafe in the town and seeing empty restaurants. The empty streets make us feel empty deep in our soul ... without the youth there is no lively, empty as if someone cursed us. How many businesses have failed and have shut down? People move daily because no dream has left for the city ... We feed our lives with hope and then the disappointment kills our hope", -writes Donika Bakiu ¹²⁵.

"There is work here but there is no salary, I have to work only for paying the current and the children," says a young man who expects a visa to go to the West. Even Tourist Agencies in the city of Kumanovo admit that the number of tickets has increased for Germany, but also for other European countries ¹²⁶.

In Kumanovo on March 9, 2019, at 14 o'clock, an open debate was held in Kumanovo on the topic: "*Kumanovo in front of the new wave of migration*", organized by Vizion M. Panelist Dije Arifi, architect and employee in the municipality of Likova and chair of the women's association '*Freedom*', said that one of the main causes of migration is that young people have lost patience and hope, although there are numerous warnings for

¹¹⁹ Interviewed by Arta Xhelili

¹²⁰ tvAlsasat 2019-03-30, 22:18

¹²¹ AlsasatM: 2019-03-16, 16:22

¹²² Gazeta Lajm, 18 prill 2019

¹²³ Gazeta Lajm, 11 prill 2019

¹²⁴ 7 Prill, 2019; <https://realiteti.uk/>

¹²⁵ <http://artistatshqiptar.net> 24 Mars, 2019

¹²⁶ tv21, Mars 23, 2019

investments. Moreover, they move not because there is no life here, but they want a better life, a higher quality of life.

Panelist Xhenis Suleymani, an intellectual, journalist, analyst and advisor of the Ministry of Diaspora, said that the environment and the circumstances that have dominated for years have created a climate of despair and demoralization, so all this has diminished every bit of hope that it will become better here. Society is experiencing the ruin and compromise of values, ranging from politics, economics, justice, education, health, and journalism till the religion. In a country where politics has transfigured the citizen as a zoon politician, where health system makes you more sick and kills you slowly than heals you, where education recruits graduates that are not literate, where the media more propagates and misinforms than informs, where the judiciary discriminates and makes selective injustice, where the economy increasingly impoverishes the poor and enriches businessmen, where religious leaders are more likely to move you away from religion than to bring you closer to it and where work is provided only by political party memberships, bonds, nepotism and corruption, there is no what can be hoped for. For this, young people have lost faith in change and being unable to rebel, some have chosen the way of conformation - adaptation or movement. Young people have big ambitions but grow up in difficult conditions. They have the talent, the potential and the élan, but they have nowhere to show it. So, one of the reasons is this: to go where they can prove themselves, where they are able to put into work their intellectual, innovative and creative capacities. Also, other factors are: very short time for waiting to find a job, the higher income, better living conditions, stable living conditions and better opportunities for progress ".

5. DISAPPOINTMENTS, HOPE AND EXPECTATIONS

From the German Embassy, 75 visas per day are issued each day. It is not about a travel visa; it is about a visa for moving. Switzerland says that each month they operate with 500-700 visas and visa-free travel is not needed, but they are provided for work. That is, only for Switzerland, 8.000 people fled within a year¹²⁷.

Evlan Asani from the German Traum Agency said: "We also look at this phenomenon with regret, but the positive side of this phenomenon is that weather youth here to stay in the cafes they will go where they can work, where a salary there is as 5 salaries here. For the last six months, only from our job agency 400 people have found work, while about 300 students a year go to work only during the months of summer vacation There are cases where there is a very good salary up to 800 euros, and as a reason to leave, he says is being not happy with the lifestyle here. 50% of those who are leaving are graduated in different professions while accepting to engage in work that has nothing to do with what they have studied but nevertheless aiming to have the highest standard of living. The procedures for regulating the documentation from the start up to the attainment of the target cost 40,000 denars"¹²⁸.

Arbër Kadriu - from the Albanian Youth Platform said: "I have no right to tell anyone to leave the homeland, because one can rightly respond to me: You do not have that right or can you give me a monthly salary ?!"¹²⁹.

6. CONCLUSION

Trends in globalization have imposed the newest type of migration, which differs from other forms and, although more limited by number, is more widespread in scope. This migration also characterizes rich countries and is not so directly related to the social status of the migrant, rather it is related to his desire to change the way and style of living. Such migrants move from their country to another country simply for a better quality of life. In addition to other forms of migration that are included in the Republic of North Macedonia, more recently, this type of migration, which is also known as lifestyle migration, is increasingly present.

Macedonian citizens, who are already working in different jobs in their country, increasingly express not only the ambitions but also the efforts to leave the workplace and to ahead to the West, even in some cases by renouncing citizenship .Although some reports and researches have been conducted before their departure on the causes and motives that led them to leave the country, there is still a large lack of post-resettlement data, i.e. data that would give a picture of the location, systematization and extent to the realization of their expectations.

It seems that the decision to abandon the homeland for some people comes as a result of alienation from work, a monotonous lifestyle, and hope from the image that is offered to the country they are aiming for, for which they have been convinced that it ensures and guarantees the highest quality of living. Conception of the way of life in contemporary society poses a challenge to each individual individually. The individual no longer sees itself

¹²⁷ AlsatM, 2019-04-07, 17:06

¹²⁸ tv21, 27 mars 2019, 21.30

¹²⁹ tv21, 27 mars 2019, 21.30, Exodus of the youth

being associated with the tradition, the social status and inherited circumstances of social settings from birth, but they associate it through immanent liberation in search of advancement position, building a new identity and creating a more favorable circumstance. Although the orientations and motivations of these migrants may be different, the common factor of this group is their belief that changing habitation can also change life opportunities in terms of improving the quality of life. Among the most frequently mentioned motives are the children's perspective, education, health, safety, employment, creative and relaxing leisure and the most favorable conditions for advancement. All these facilities, advantages and favors that are thought to be provided by the chosen destination are usually compared to the negative sides of the country they leave.

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Interviews, media reports, statistics, panel discussions etc...