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ZNAČILNOSTI POVRATNIH SELITEV SLOVENSKE DIASPORE IZ ARGENTINE

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Izvleček

Prispevek obravnava povratne selitve slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev iz Argentine. V prvem delu prispevka se osredotočamo na splošni oris povratnih selitev, ki se v kontekstu globalizacije in naraščajočih migracijskih tokov pojavljajo kot odziv na spremenjene življenjske okoliščine, ekonomske priložnosti ali kot posledica iskanja osebne in kulturne identitete ter predstavljamo ozadje in zgodovinski kontekst slovenskega izseljevanja v Argentino in orišemo značilnosti slovenske diaspore v Argentini. V drugem delu predstavljamo analizo in interpretacijo rezultatov podatkov, ki smo jih zbrali s pomočjo polstrukturiranih intervjujev biografsko-interpretativne narativne metode med slovenskimi priseljenci iz Argentine, ki v Sloveniji predstavljajo specifično skupnost in vzdržujejo transnacionalne povezave z Argentino.

Ključne besede: slovensko izseljenstvo, diaspora, povratne selitve, Argentina, Slovenija, narodna identiteta

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1 UVOD

Kljub temu da so selitve prisotne skozi celotno zgodovino človeštva, so šele na prelomu 20. stoletja vstopile v središče znanstvenih raziskovanj. Od takrat naprej so začele pridobivati vse pomembnejše mesto v različnih znanstvenih vedah, kot so sociologija, geografija, antropologija, ekonomija in druge (King, 1978, Lukšič Hacin, 2010) ter postale »izrazito interdisciplinarno in multidisciplinarno področje« raziskovanja (Ilc Klun, 2014, str. 166). Navkljub vse večji priljubljenosti selitvenih študij pa je tema povratnih selitev dolgo ostajala na obrobju raziskovanj, saj so jih raziskovalci večinoma obravnavali oziroma omenjali v kontekstu širših selitvenih procesov, skoraj nikoli pa kot glavno temo znanstvenih raziskovanj (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006b, Mlekuž, 2003). Še redkeje so bile obravnavane selitve potomcev izseljencev. Tradicionalno so se selitvene študije osredotočale na prvo generacijo migrantov, potomci pa so bili večinoma omenjeni v kontekstu integracijskih ali asimilacijskih izzivov (King, Christou, 2011).

V zadnjem času je opaziti povečanje zanimanja za raziskovanje povratnih selitev, s čimer to področje utrjuje svoje mesto znotraj selitvenih študij (Bilecen, 2022; Gemi, Triandafyllidou, 2021; King, Kuschminder, 2022). King in Christou (2011, str. 452) navajata, da ta trend ni posledica dejanskega povečanja selitvenih tokov, temveč predstavlja »rekonceptualizacijo selitvenih fenomenov« znotraj novih paradigem, kot je transnacionalnost. King in Kuschminder (2022) kljub temu ugotavljata, da tematika povratnih selitev še vedno ne zavzema enega od osrednjih mest v literaturi selitvenih študij in da bi veljalo povratnim selitvam tako na globalni kot nacionalni ravni tudi v raziskovanju nameniti večjo pozornost.

V Sloveniji je bilo zanimanje za raziskave povratnih selitev slovenske diaspore manj izrazito. Raziskovanje tega procesa je potekalo zlasti v treh obdobjih, in sicer v drugi polovici 70. let 20. stoletja, ko so nekatera dela obravnavala predvsem tematiko vračanja zdomcev¹ iz Nemčije nazaj v Slovenijo (Toplak, 2004), v 90. letih po osamosvojitvi Slovenije (Žigon, 1998), ko smo zaradi osamosvojitve beležili rahlo povečano stopnjo povratnih selitev, še največ iz Argentine (Lukšič Hacin, 2006a), in na prelomu tisočletja (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006a; 2006b; Repič, 2006; Žigon, 2001). Kljub temu se povratne selitve v znanstveni in strokovni literaturi obravnavajo predvsem kot del širših raziskav slovenske diaspore. Dejstvo je tudi, da je koncept povratnih selitev slabo poznan med splošno javnostjo (Ilc Klun, 2014).

Z namenom, da bi zapolnili omenjeno raziskovalno vrzel, smo v raziskavi, ki smo jo izvedli leta 2022, preučevali povratne selitve slovenskih izseljencev v Argentini in selitve potomcev slovenskih izseljencev v Argentini v Slovenijo, s poudarkom na celostnem razumevanju procesov pred, med in po povratni selitvi. Pri raziskovanju povratnih selitev smo upoštevali večdimenzionalnost in kompleksnost procesa. To

1 Na tem mestu velja omeniti, da v sodobnih selitvenih študijah zdomcev ne uvrščamo v skupino povratnih selitev, saj so se v tujino izselili le začasno.

je zahtevalo interdisciplinarni pristop, ki je združeval geografske, sociološke, ekonomske in zgodovinske perspektive raziskovanja. Poleg tega je bilo ključnega pomena vključevanje (re)migrantov v raziskovalni proces, saj so njihove osebne izkušnje in perspektive bistveno pripomogle k celovitemu razumevanju procesa (re)migracije.

Preučevanje povratnih selitev slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev je pomembno, saj nam razumevanje teh procesov daje vpogled v sodobne selitvene trende, tudi slovenske diaspore, in poda značilnosti in dinamiko selitvenih procesov, v katere je bila in je vpeta Slovenija skozi različna časovna obdobja.

2 TERMINOLOŠKA IZHODIŠČA

V domači in tuji literaturi, ki se ukvarja s tematiko povratnih selitev, obstaja več različnih terminov, ki se uporabljajo za opisovanje tega procesa. Tako v slovenski literaturi, ki povzema tudi tujo, lahko zasledimo izraze, kot so povratna migracija, povratništvo (Mlekuž, 2006; 2021), remigracija (Ilc Klun, 2014), reemigracija, repatriacija, vrnitvena migracija (IOM, 2006), v angleški literaturi pa predvsem izraze, kot so *counterstream migration*, *reverse migration*, *U-turn migration*, *homeward migration* in podobno. Opozoriti pa moramo, da pri navedenih terminih v rabi ne gre za popolne sinonime. Tako se na primer izraz *povratništvo* v slovenski literaturi uporablja kot sinonim za *povratno migracijo*, vendar ima beseda *povratnik*, ki izhaja iz izraza povratništvo, lahko tudi negativno konotacijo in se med drugim nanaša tudi na nekoga, ki je bil že »obsojen, pa stori novo kaznivo dejanje« (SSKJ, 2022), torej ga direktno ne povezujemo s procesom selitve kot take. Tudi pri izrazu repatriacija lahko zasledimo različne interpretacije. Izraz izhaja iz latinske besede *repatriare*, ki pomeni »vrnitev v domovino« (Gombač, 2006), Geografski terminološki slovar (2022) pa repatriacijo opiše kot »vrnitev izseljencev, prebivalstva, ki živi na ozemlju druge države, ali na drugem območju znotraj lastne države, v domovino, kraj prvotnega bivališča«. Danes ima izraz repatriacija predvsem politično konotacijo in ga v literaturi in medijih uporabljajo za opisovanje vračanja beguncev in vojnih ujetnikov v državo, katere državljani so (IOM, 2006). Tudi Glosar migracij (IOM, 2006, str. 62) opisuje, da je repatriacija osebna pravica begunca ali vojnega ujetnika in da je »možnost repatriacije osebna odločitev posameznika in ne države. Repatriacija vključuje tudi dolžnost države, da upravičenim osebam (vojakom in civilnim osebam) dovoli odhod, ter dolžnost izvirne države, da sprejme svoje državljane. Repatriacija se nanaša tudi na diplomatske predstavnike in mednarodne uslužbence v času mednarodne krize.« Gombač (2006) navaja, da je bila repatriacija v Sloveniji del družbene realnosti predvsem po drugi svetovni vojni, ko so se jugoslovanski in tuji državljani (preko Slovenije) vračali v svoje domovine. V izogib terminološki nekonsistentnosti zato predlagamo uporabo izraza remigracija ali slovensko ustreznico povratna selitev, za označevanje tistih migrantov, ki se po določenem obdobju bivanja izven države izvora vrnejo, pa povratni migranti.

Definicije povratnih selitev, kot jih razumemo danes, segajo približno pol stoletja nazaj (Bilgili, 2022). V šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja so bile prvič izvedene specifične študije, ki so se osredotočale izključno na ta selitveni proces, ki so ga raziskovalci preučevali na primeru povratnih selitev iz ZDA v Italijo in iz Združenega kraljestva na karibske otoke (King, Kuschminder, 2022).

V sedemdesetih letih 20. stoletja je naftna kriza, ki je pretresla svetovno gospodarstvo, vplivala tudi na dinamiko selitvenih procesov, saj je sprožila obsežne povratne selitve delavcev. V študijah, ki so obravnavale omenjen proces, so preučevali predvsem razloge za to – deindustrializacijo, zaton fordističnega gospodarskega modela, družinske odločitve, izboljšanje gospodarskih razmer v izvornih državah migrantov (King, Kuschminder, 2022). V tem kontekstu je Frank Bovenkerk (1974) v delu »The Sociology of Return Migration« kot prvi sistematično analiziral in teoretiziral povratne selitve in s tem postavil temelje za nadaljnje raziskave (King, Christou, 2011). Bovenkerk (1974) definira povratne selitve kot proces, ki se zgodi, ko se posamezniki po izselitvi vrnejo v svojo državo (ali regijo) izvora. V svoji definiciji Bovenkerk torej kot povratnega migranta označuje le tistega, ki je sam emigriral iz izvornega okolja in se je po določenem času vrnil v izvorno okolje, ne pa tudi njegovih potomcev, ki se preselijo v izvorno okolje svojih prednikov.

V osemdesetih letih je George Gmelch z delom »Return Migration« oblikoval eno prvih in širše sprejetih definicij povratne selitve, ki jo opredeljuje kot gibanje migrantov nazaj v domovino z namenom ponovne naselitve (Gmelch, 1980). V devetdesetih letih in v prvem desetletju 21. stoletja je raziskovanje selitev postalo tesno povezano s procesi globalizacije, kar sta v svojem delu »The Age of Migration« obravnavala tudi Castles in Miller (1993).

Selitve so bile dolgo razumljene kot izrazito enosmeren in enkraten pojav, pri čemer so bile povratne selitve obravnavane kot možna zaključna faza v življenju posameznika, ki se je najprej izselil in nato ponovno priselil (Toplak, 2006). Številni avtorji, med njimi na primer Toplak (2006), Lukšič-Hacin (2006a) in King (2015) pa opozarjajo, da je takšno enosmerno in statično razumevanje povratnih selitev preveč poenostavljeno in ne upošteva kompleksnosti procesov, ki sledijo prvotni izselitvi. Temu odgovarjajo nove konceptualizacije povratnih selitev, ki so v prvih desetletjih 21. stoletja prinesle ponoven interes za preučevanje tega procesa in ki za razliko od predhodnega razumevanja selitev kot zaključka t. i. selitvenega toka povratne selitve razumevajo kot del kroženja v transnacionalnem prostoru (Gemi, Trinadfyllidou, 2021). Med državo izvora in državo gostiteljico migrant namreč ohranja močne povezave, kar oblikuje transnacionalno identiteto, saj (fizično, socialno, kulturno) ni zasidran v nobeno od njiju (Al-Ali in Koser, 2002, cit. po Cassarino, 2004). Tako King (2015) faze selitvenega toka razširi na povratne migracije² (ang. *return migration*),

2 Ta faza se nanaša na migrante, ki se po daljšem obdobju bivanja v tujini ali regiji vrnejo v svojo izvorno državo ali regijo.

tranzitne migracije³ (ang. *transilient migration*), reemigracije⁴ (ang. *reemigration*), drugotne migracije⁵ (ang. *second-time migration*) in krožne migracije⁶ (ang. *circular migration*) ter s tem poudari raznolikost in kompleksnost procesov povratnih selitev, ki presegajo zgolj enostavno izseljevanje in priseljevanje.

V 21. stoletju se pogosto uveljavljajo tudi definicije mednarodnih organizacij. Mednarodna organizacija za migracije (IOM) povratne selitve definira kot proces vrnitve osebe v njeno izvorno državo ali državo običajnega prebivališča po vsaj enoletnem bivanju v tujini, pri čemer je lahko ta vrnitev prostovoljna ali prisilna (IOM, 2006). Pri tej definiciji se izpostavita dve dimenziji – časovna (vrnitev po vsaj enoletnem bivanju v tujini) in dimenzija prisile-prostovoljstva.

Ker v prispevku obravnavamo procese povratnih selitev tako izseljencev kot njihovih potomcev, velja omeniti, da se tudi v tem okviru pojavlja obširna terminologija kot tudi konceptualizacije povratnih selitev. Predvsem so se postavljala vprašanja vključevanja selitev potomcev izseljencev v državo izvora prednikov, kar je razdvajalo in sprožilo številne razprave med različnimi avtorji. Nekateri avtorji namreč povratne selitve povezujejo zgolj z migranti, ki so se po določenem časovnem obdobju priselili nazaj v svoje izvorno okolje, nekateri pa v koncept povratnih selitev vključujejo tudi njihove potomce.

V svojem delu iz leta 1974 Bovenkerk izpostavlja selitve v domovino prednikov (ang. *ancestral return*) kot poseben tip povratnih selitev. Te opredeli kot selitve potomcev izseljencev v kraj izvora njihovih prednikov, pri čemer kot primer navaja rastafarijansko gibanje »*Back to Africa*«. Kljub temu da Bovenkerk omenjene selitve obravnava kot obrobni primer povratnih selitev, jih označi kot »vrnitev, ki ni zares vrnitev« (Bovenkerk, 1974, str. 19). Conway in Potter (2009) sta naklonjena vključevanju naslednje generacije (tj. potomcev) v pojmovanje povratnih selitev in ta selitveni proces definirata kot večgeneracijski in ga poimenujeta »povratna selitev naslednje generacije« (ang. *return migration of the next generation*). Po drugi strani pa nekateri drugi avtorji (Batič, 2003; Lukšič-Hacin, 2006b; Mlekuž, 2006; Toplak, 2006) temu nasprotujejo, saj so mnenja, da bi moral t. i. povratni selitveni tok zajemati le mobilnost posameznika in ne večgeneracijske premike (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006b).

Selitve potomcev izseljencev v državo izvora prednikov so pogosto obravnavane v kontekstu študij diaspor. Diaspore so opredeljene kot narodnostne skupine, ki so geografsko razpršene iz prvotne domovine in ki jih združuje kolektivni spomin, občutek

3 Ta faza se nanaša na migrante, ki se iz prve države ali regije priselitve preselijo v drugo državo ali regijo, brez povratka v svojo izvorno državo ali regijo.

4 Gre za fazo, ko se migranti, ki so se že priselili nazaj v svojo izvorno državo ali regijo, ponovno izselijo v državo ali regijo, v kateri so prej živeli.

5 Ta faza opisuje proces, ko se migranti po povratku v svojo izvorno državo ali regijo ponovno izselijo, vendar ne nazaj v prejšnjo državo ali regijo, temveč na drugo destinacijo.

6 Ta termin se nanaša na migrante, ki se redno selijo med svojo izvorno državo ali regijo in drugimi destinacijami. Sem lahko spadajo tudi sezonske migracije, ki so odvisne od klimatskih razmer ali sezonskega dela.

pripadnosti in hrepenenje po prvotni domovini (King, Christou, 2011, Tsuda, 2016). V okviru študij diaspor so se razvili različni pojmi, ki opisujejo selitve potomcev izseljencev v državo njihovih prednikov. King in Christou (2011) predstavljata koncept protidiaspornih migracij (ang. *counter-diasporic migration*) kot selitve, ki so nasprotno procesu nastajanja diaspor. Tsuda (2019) uporablja širši pojem vrnitve diaspore (ang. *diasporic return*), ki vključuje povratne selitve (ang. *return migration*) za prvo in 1,5 generacijo izseljencev⁷ ter etnične remigracije (ang. *ethnic return migration*) za potomce izseljencev.

V tem prispevku bomo v izogib terminološkim nejasnostim za primer selitve potomcev izseljencev v državo izvora njihovih prednikov uporabljali termin selitve potomcev izseljencev v državo izvora prednikov. Pojem povratne selitve pa bomo uporabili izključno za opis selitvenega procesa posameznikov, ki se vračajo v svojo državo izselitve.

3 SLOVENSKA DIASPORA V ARGENTINI

Neuradne ocene kažejo, da trenutno v Argentini prebiva približno 30.000 slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev (Slovenci v Južni Ameriki, 2022). Množične selitve Slovencev v to državo so se odvijale v treh glavnih obdobjih: v drugi polovici 19. stoletja, med obema svetovnimima vojnama in po drugi svetovni vojni (Slovenci v Južni Ameriki, 2022, Žigon, 1998).

Med prvimi Slovenci, ki so se naselili na območju današnje Argentine, so bili jezuitski misijonarji, ki so se tja priseljevali od sredine 17. stoletja dalje (Mislej, 1995). V drugi polovici 19. stoletja je Argentina zaradi geopolitičnih (npr. meddržavni dogovor med Argentino in Avstrijo iz leta 1878 o selitvi okoli 200 do 300 družin) in ekonomskih (npr. slabe kmetijske razmere in slabe letine) razlogov odprla svoja vrata evropskim priseljenecem (Mislej, 1995; Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998; 2001). V tem času se je v Argentino priselilo okoli 1000 Slovencev, večinoma kot avstrijski in italijanski državljani (Repič, 2006). Naselili so se predvsem v severnih provincah Formosa in Chaco, v nekoliko južneje ležečih provincah, kot sta Entre Ríos in Santa Fe, ter v mestih Córdoba, Mendoza in Buenos Aires (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998).

Med svetovnimima vojnama je sledil drugi večji val slovenskega priseljevanja – takrat naj bi se po ocenah v Argentino priselilo med 25.000 in 30.000 Slovencev (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998). Razlogi za priselitev so bili sprva politični (npr. po letu 1922 je bilo v času italijanskega fašizma intenzivno izseljevanje slovenskega prebivalstva iz

7 Številni raziskovalci določajo generacijsko pripadnost v družinah z migracijsko izkušnjo na podlagi genealoškega zaporedja rojstev. Tako kategorizirajo starše kot pripadnike »prve generacije«, medtem ko njihovi otroci, neodvisno od kraja rojstva, spadajo v kategorijo »druge« ali »naslednje generacije«. Drugi avtorji pa generacijsko pripadnost razlikujejo glede na kraj rojstva otrok priseljenecv. Tisti, ki so se rodili v državi izvora in odraščali v državi gostiteljici, so razvrščeni kot del »1,5 generacije«, medtem ko so otroci, rojeni v državi gostiteljici, opredeljeni kot del »druge« ali »naslednje generacije« (Tsuda, 2016).

Primorske), kasneje pa tudi ekonomski (npr. med leti 1926 in 1929 kot posledica svetovne gospodarske krize) (Žigon, 1998). Slovenski priseljenci so se naselili predvsem v večjih mestih, kot so Buenos Aires, Rosario in Córdoba in se tam zaposlili večinoma kot industrijski delavci (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998). V tem obdobju so se začeli tudi politično in kulturno organizirati, ustanavljali so narodne domove, v katerih so skrbeli za slovenski jezik in šolstvo, povezovali so se v slovenska društva in izdajali slovenski tisk – slovenske revije in druga glasila (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998).

Po drugi svetovni vojni je Argentina doživela zadnji večji val slovenskega priseljevanja, ki je bil povezan s političnimi begunci, ki so bežali pred novo družbeno-politično ureditvijo, komunizmom v Jugoslaviji (Žigon, 1998; 2001), zato je ta val priselitev pogosto imenovan »slovenska politična emigracija« (Žigon, 1998; 2001). Leta 1947 naj bi se po ocenah Žigona (2001) v Argentino priselilo 89 slovenskih beguncev, do leta 1955 pa naj bi prišlo v Argentino 5.282 slovenskih priseljencev, večina v družinah, nekaj pa se jih je priselilo samostojno (Žigon, 2001). Do novih slovenskih priseljencev je bila argentinska oblast pozitivno naravnana, zato se je lahko slovenska skupnost društveno in kulturno samoorganizirala. V Buenos Airesu so zgradili sedem slovenskih narodnih domov, kjer so poleg šolstva izvajali različne kulturne, športne, verske in druge dejavnosti.

Slovenska povojna izseljenska skupnost v Argentini še vedno vzdržuje bogato in raznoliko kulturno in društveno življenje. Izobraževanje igra ključno vlogo pri ohranjanju kontinuitete skupnosti, saj omogoča prenos slovenskega jezika in kulture na naslednje generacije izseljencev in njihovih potomcev. V začetni fazi je izobraževalni sistem obsegal predvsem verouk in tečaje slovenskega jezika, kar se je leta 1950 formaliziralo in leta 1966 razvilo v uradne slovenske osnovne šole. Trenutno v slovenski skupnosti v Argentini delujejo vrtni, osnovne šole in srednješolski tečaji, ki ponujajo izobraževalne programe kot dopolnitev argentinskemu šolskemu sistemu, vključno s predmeti slovenščina, slovenska zgodovina, geografija, verouk in petje (Žigon, 2001).

4 POVROTNE SELITVE SLOVENSkih IZSELJENCEV IN SELITVE POTOMCEV SLOVENSkih IZSELJENCEV IZ ARGENTINE

Raziskovalci, ki v svojih študijah obravnavajo povratne selitve slovenskih izseljencev iz Argentine in selitve njihovih potomcev opisujejo dva večja valova priselitev v Slovenijo: prvi po letu 1990, zlasti takoj po osamosvojitvi, in drugi po letu 2000, po gospodarski krizi v Argentini (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). V okviru naše raziskave smo identificirali še tretji val, ki se nanaša predvsem na priseljevanje potomcev slovenskih izseljencev in časovno sovпада z epidemijo covid-19. Uradnih podatkov o natančnem številu oseb, ki so se v Slovenijo priselile v posameznih obdobjih, ni mogoče pridobiti. Repič (2006) navaja ocene Izseljenskega društva Slovenija v svetu, po

katerih naj bi se po letu 1990 iz Argentine priselilo okoli 200 slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev, po koncu gospodarske krize v Argentini leta 2002 pa vse do leta 2005 pa še približno 230. Omenjeno društvo danes več ne podaja ocen o priselitvah, saj naj bi se danes številni izseljenci za pomoč pri selitvi zanašali predvsem na svoje znanke, sorodnike in prijatelje, ki že živijo v Sloveniji.

Znanstvenih razprav, ki obravnavajo povratne selitve slovenskih izseljencev in selitve njihovih potomcev iz Argentine, je izredno malo. V letu 2006 sta bili opravljeni dve kvalitativni raziskavi (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). V nadaljevanju podajamo nekaj ključnih ugotovitev obeh raziskav, v prvi vrsti demogeografski oris ciljne skupine, ki smo jo raziskovali tudi sami.

Repič (2006) v svoji raziskavi ugotavlja, da je bila večina povratnih migrantov v Argentini vključena v slovensko skupnost, v kateri so bodisi odraščali ali pa imeli z njo aktivne stike. Znotraj te skupnosti so posebno pozornost namenjali ohranjanju znanja slovenskega jezika, skupinskega spomina na Slovenijo kot izvorno domovino ter ohranjanju zgodovinskega zavedanja o politični emigraciji svojih prednikov. To je prispevalo k oblikovanju močne skupinske identitete in k simbolni ter duhovni povezanosti s Slovenijo. Značilnosti slovenske skupnosti v Argentini so pomembno vplivale na odločitve posameznikov za vrnitev ter na sam proces povratne selitve. Repič (2006, str. 170) opisuje, da je za mnoge selitev pomenila »vračanje k slovenskim koreninam« ter izpostavlja, da so se nekateri potomci, rojeni v Argentini, ob priselitvi v Slovenijo identificirali kot »povratniki«, saj jim je to omogočilo legitimacijo svojega porekla in pripadnosti, večina se je kljub slovenskemu državljanstvu počutila, da so v Sloveniji priseljenci (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c). Raziskavi sta ugotovili, da so se priseljenci priseljevali bodisi posamezno bodisi z družinami, čeprav je Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) v svoji raziskavi zabeležila več primerov družinskih priselitev, Repič (2006) pa je s svojo raziskavo zaznal večji delež priseljevanja med mlajšimi pripadniki slovenske skupnosti, ki so že imeli urejeno slovensko državljanstvo. Večina priseljencev je pred priselitvijo v Slovenijo državo vsaj enkrat obiskala (Repič, 2006). V kontekstu analize migracijskih motivov obe raziskavi izpostavljata, da so bile odločitve za selitev v tem obdobju pogosto povezane s političnimi spremembami v Sloveniji (Lukšič-Hacin 2006c; Repič, 2006). Osamosvojitve Slovenije je bila pogosto omenjena kot ključni dejavnik privlačnosti, zlasti v prvih letih po letu 1990, po letu 2000 pa so prevladali dejavniki potiskanja iz Argentine – gospodarska kriza v Argentini, naraščanje kriminala in splošno poslabšanje življenjske varnosti v Argentini (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). Pri izseljencih, ki so se iz Slovenije izselili po drugi svetovni vojni, je raziskava Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) pokazala, da so kot razloge za selitev pogosto navajali osamosvojitve, slovenstvo in željo po vrnitvi v izvorno domovino. Po drugi strani pa so potomci slovenskih izseljencev, rojeni v Argentini, kot glavna motiva za selitev izpostavljali slovenstvo in slovenske korenine. Poleg teh razlogov so navajali tudi zaposlitev, izobraževanje, napredovanje, študij, gospodarsko krizo v Argentini ter osebne razloge, kot sta ljubezen ali ločitev. Podobne ugotovitve o razlogih za selitev navaja

tudi Repič (2006). Priseljenci so se v Slovenijo priseljevali bodisi začasno ali stalno. Za zgodnje valove priseljevanja je bilo značilno samostojno priseljevanje, medtem ko so v kasnejših obdobjih priseljencem pri priseljevanju v Slovenijo pogosto pomagali sorodniki, prijatelji, duhovniki in dobrotniki ter nevladne organizacije, kot so Izseljensko društvo Slovenija v svetu, Rafaelova družba, Karitas in Slovenska izseljenska matica (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). Raziskava Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) je razkrila, da so priseljenci ob selitvi v Slovenijo naleteli na številne težave, povezane predvsem z dostopnostjo informacij o uradnih postopkih. Največ težav so imeli pri organizacijskih in finančnih vidikih selitve, urejanju dokumentacije, iskanju bivališča, priznavanju v tujini pridobljene izobrazbe, izpopolnjevanju izobrazbe in jezika ter vključevanju otrok v slovenski šolski sistem. Po ugotovitvah Repiča (2006) so slovenski priseljenci iz Argentine po priselitvi v Slovenijo uporabljali strategije medsebojnega povezovanja, ki so jim bile znane že iz slovenskih skupnosti v Argentini. V Sloveniji so oblikovali mrežo neformalnih in društvenih povezav, predvsem preko Izseljenskega društva Slovenija v svetu, ustanovljenega leta 1991, in se v skupnosti povezali na osnovi skupnih izkušenj, izvorne domovine, narodne identitete in porekla. Jezik je ohranil svojo vlogo kot pomemben identifikator povezovanja in opredeljevanja narodne identitete, v Argentini je bila to slovenščina, v Sloveniji pa je to postala španščina. Priseljenci so pomagali vzpostaviti in poglobiti tudi povezave med Argentino in Slovenijo, ki so bile zaznamovane s pogostimi obiski in potovanji, različnimi oblikami sodelovanja in ohranjanjem stikov preko pisem, telefona ali drugih komunikacijskih sredstev (Repič, 2006).

5 METODOLOŠKI PRISTOP

Namen raziskave, ki smo jo izpeljali v letu 2022, je bil preučiti povratne selitve slovenskih izseljencev iz Argentine in selitve njihovih potomcev v Slovenijo. S pomočjo polstrukturiranih intervjujev, ki so potekali v okviru biografsko-interpretativno narativnega metodološkega pristopa, smo raziskovali, kdo so tisti posamezniki slovenske izseljenske skupnosti v Argentini, ki se selijo v Slovenijo, kateri so ključni dejavniki, ki sprožijo ta selitveni proces, kako se posamezniki (re)integrirajo v državo svojega izvora oziroma v državo izvora svojih prednikov, kakšno je vzpostavljanje transnacionalnih povezav med Slovenijo in Argentino ter kako posamezniki dojemajo svojo narodno identiteto.

Biografsko-interpretativna narativna metoda je metoda kvalitativnega raziskovalnega pristopa, v okviru katere za pridobivanje podatkov uporabljamo polstrukturirani poglobljeni intervju. Predstavlja kvalitativni pristop k raziskovanju družbenih pojavov, pri čemer se osredotoča na zbiranje in analizo osebnih pripovedi ali zgodb. Ta metodološki pristop je pomemben za razumevanje subjektivnih izkušenj in perspektiv posameznikov, kar je ključno pri preučevanju kompleksnih in večplastnih

procesov, kamor sodijo tudi selitve. Raziskovalcem omogoča, da v preučevanje procesa ne zajamejo le splošne in objektivne informacije, temveč tudi osebne izkušnje posameznikov, ki prispevajo emocionalni, kulturni in socialni vidik selitvenega procesa. Biografsko-interpretativni narativni pristop omogoča »empirično obravnavo kompleksnosti, raznolikosti in spremenljivosti selitev tako, da poudari individualne izkušnje« (Pajnik, Bajt, 2006, str. 74). Ta pristop omogoča torej razumevanje osebnih in edinstvenih selitvenih poti posameznikov, vključno z motivacijami za selitev, izkušnjami integracije in soočenjem s spremembami identitete. Preko biografskih pripovedi lahko raziskovalci raziskujejo, kako migranti vzdržujejo vezi z domovino in kako te vezi vplivajo na njihovo življenje v državi priselitve (Eastmond, 2007). Kljub osredotočenosti na individualne izkušnje lahko metoda razkrije tudi širše vzorce in trende, kar prispeva k boljšemu razumevanju selitvenih procesov. Po drugi strani pa velja izpostaviti, da ima lahko omenjen metodološki pristop tudi nekaj omejitev. Ena izmed njih je subjektivnost, saj so pridobljeni podatki pogosto subjektivni in temeljijo na osebni perspektivi intervjuvanca. To pomeni, da lahko različni intervjuvanci isti proces ali pojav dojemajo in ga interpretirajo drugače. Druga omejitev je dejstvo, da življenjske zgodbe ne morejo vedno predstavljati izkušenj celotne populacije, torej dobljenih podatkov ne moremo posploševati. Prav tako lahko osredotočenost zgolj na zgodbe intervjuvancev vodi do zanemarjanja širših družbenih, političnih in drugih dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na pojav ali proces, ki ga preučujemo (v našem primeru povratne selitve). Raziskovalec mora pri interpretaciji podatkov, ki jih zbere s pomočjo biografsko-interpretativnega metodološkega pristopa paziti, da ne pride do napačne ali pristranske interpretacije. Kljub omejitvam pa velja omeniti, da ta pristop ponuja dragocen vpogled v osebne izkušnje in perspektive, ki jih kvantitativni pristopi raziskovanja ne morejo zajeti.

V okviru naše raziskave smo izvedli serijo polstrukturiranih intervjujev med 20. majem in 27. julijem 2022. Skupno smo opravili 12 intervjujev, v katerih je sodelovalo 17 intervjuvancev. Nekateri intervjuji so bili izvedeni skupinsko, saj so v njih sodelovale družine, ki so se preselile skupaj in si delile migracijsko izkušnjo. S potencialnimi intervjuvanci smo predhodno stopili v stik, jim razložili namen raziskave in predstavili raziskovalna področja. Po prejetem soglasju smo se z intervjuvanci dogovorili za način in čas izvedbe intervjujev, hkrati pa smo bili pozorni na njihove želje in časovno razpoložljivost. Da bi zagotovili primerljivost podatkov, smo si prizadevali izvajati intervjuje na enoten način, pri čemer smo se osredotočili na osebno in neposredno komunikacijo z intervjuvanci. Od skupno 12 intervjujev je bilo 9 opravljenih osebno, trije pa preko spletnih orodij. Vsi intervjuji, ki smo jih izvedli v obliki pogovora, so bili tudi glasovno posneti. Po izvedbi intervjujev je sledil proces transkripcije, v katerem smo glasovne posnetke pretvorili v dobesedne besedilne zapise. Ti prepisi so služili kot temelj za nadaljnjo analizo podatkov, kjer smo vsebino intervjujev analizirali in odgovore intervjuvancev sistematično kategorizirali in s tem podatke strukturirali v smiselne sklope. Po kategorizaciji smo se lotili poglobljene analize in sinteze

informacij s ciljem razumeti in interpretirati pomene, ki jih intervjuvanci pripisujejo svojim migracijskim izkušnjam.

V okviru raziskave smo za potrebe izvedbe polstrukturiranih intervjujev razvili vprašalnik, ki je bil strukturiran v tri tematske sklope. Prvi se je osredotočal na osebne informacije intervjuvancev, njihove izkušnje življenja v Argentini, znanje slovenskega jezika in njihove povezave s Slovenijo. Drugi sklop je bil namenjen raziskovanju samega procesa selitve intervjuvancev, vključno z motivi, pripravami in doživljanji selitve. Tretji sklop pa se je osredotočal na izkušnje intervjuvancev z življenjem v Sloveniji in načine vzdrževanja povezav z Argentino.

V procesu izbire intervjuvancev smo upoštevali različne demografske parametre, kot so spol, starost in leto priselitve v Slovenijo, ter poskušali zajeti tudi geografsko raznolikost krajev izselitve v Argentini. Kljub osredotočenosti raziskave tako na slovenske izseljence kot tudi potomce slovenskih izseljencev, smo pridobili le eno intervjuvanko, ki je bila slovenska izseljenka, poleg tega pa so v intervjujih sodelovali tudi posamezniki, ki so izstopali iz tega vzorca. Med njimi sta bila intervjuvanka P, potomka priseljencev iz Argentine, rojena v Sloveniji, in intervjuvanec M, ki je argentinskega porekla, in je sodeloval kot družinski član, ki si je z njimi delil izkušnjo selitve v Slovenijo. Kljub temu smo oba vključili v demografsko analizo. Večina intervjuvancev je izrazila željo po ohranjanju anonimnosti, kar smo storili s pomočjo poimenovanja intervjuvancev po zaporednih črkah abecede, ki so razporejene glede na datum njihove priselitve v Slovenijo.

Demografski profil intervjuvancev je bil naslednji: povprečna starost intervjuvancev je bila 36,13 let, pri čemer je bilo v raziskavo vključenih 47 % moških in 53 % žensk. Med intervjuvanci je bilo 15 rojenih v Argentini, medtem ko sta bili dve intervjuvanki rojeni v Sloveniji. Večina, tj. 11 intervjuvancev, se je izselila iz province Buenos Aires, 3 iz province Tucuman in 2 iz province Rio Negro. Razen intervjuvanca M argentinskega porekla, so bili vsi ostali intervjuvanci slovenskega rodu. Vsi intervjuvanci so izhajali iz slovenske izseljenske skupnosti, ki se je oblikovala po drugi svetovni vojni. V času intervjujev je imela večina intervjuvancev, tj. 10, status zaposlene osebe, 3 so bili učenci ali dijaki, 2 sta bila brez zaposlitve – kar lahko povežemo z dejstvom, da sta bila v Sloveniji šele kratek čas in sta še iskala zaposlitev, ena intervjuvanka pa je imela status upokojenke.

6 REZULTATI IN RAZPRAVA

V nadaljevanju podrobneje predstavljamo rezultate kvalitativne raziskave v treh sklopih (Življenje v Argentini, Selitev v Slovenijo, Življenje v Sloveniji), saj lahko na ta način najbolj celovito orišemo in podrobneje predstavimo značilnosti slovenske skupnosti, ki se je priselila iz Argentine.

6.1 Življenje v Argentini

V raziskavi smo najprej preučevali jezikovni profil pripadnikov slovenske diaspore, ki so se iz Argentine priselili v Slovenijo. Slovenski jezik je bil v okviru slovenske skupnosti v Argentini osrednji identifikator slovenskega izseljenstva. Kot smo že uvodoma pisali, je imelo znanje in ohranjanje slovenskega jezika bistveno vlogo v vzdrževanju in krepitvi njihove narodne in kulturne identitete. Slovenska skupnost je v Argentini skrbno ohranjala slovenski jezik skozi različne oblike izobraževanja, kot so osnovnošolsko izobraževanje, tečaji jezika in kulturne aktivnosti, ki so bile namenjene ohranjanju slovenskega jezika in kulture. Vse to je odsevalo ne le željo po ohranjanju jezikovne dediščine, ampak je imelo pomembno vlogo pri utrjevanju skupnostnih vezi in ohranjanju zavesti o skupni slovenski identiteti.

V skupini intervjuvancev smo identificirali pet skupin glede na njihov odnos in znanje slovenskega jezika pred selitvijo v Slovenijo. V prvo skupino smo uvrstili devet intervjuvancev, katerih prvi jezik je bila slovenščina, španščino pa so se naučili ob vstopu v argentinski šolski sistem. V drugo skupino smo uvrstili tri intervjuvance, ki so iz mešanih zakonov in so bili vzgojeni v obeh jezikih, slovenščini in španščini. V tretjo skupino smo uvrstili eno intervjuvanko (N), ki se je španščine naučila po priselitvi v Argentino, v četrto skupino intervjuvanko (A), ki se je iz Argentine izselila v zgodnjem otroštvu in se španščine ni nikoli naučila, v peto pa intervjuvanko (P), ki je potomka slovenskih priseljencev iz Argentine in je odraščala dvojezično. Za večino intervjuvancev je slovenščina predstavljala prvi jezik ali enega od njih. Izjeme so bile intervjuvanke A, N in P. Večina je bila vključena v organizirano slovensko šolanje v Argentini, ki je zajemalo vrtce, šole in srednješolske tečaje. Nekateri so se udeležili tudi dodatnih tečajev slovenščine na daljavo preko spleta. Intervjuvanci so v Argentini slovensko govorili v družinskih krogih in znotraj slovenske skupnosti, medtem ko je potekalo sporazumevanje z vrstniki in argentinskimi družinami večinoma v španskem jeziku, kar v svojih navedbah omenjata tudi intervjuvanca B in G:

»Večino moje slovenščine sem se naučil od mojih starih staršev, ker moja starša sta delala, jaz pa sem se cele dneve, že od dojenčka, pazil pri njiju. In potem sem tudi z vsemi mojimi tetami in strici govoril slovensko, ker je bila kultura tega, da doma govoriš slovensko v družini /.../« (Intervjuvanec B, 2022).

»To je zelo žalostno, ampak z vrstniki govorimo po špansko. Sem pa opazila, da skupnost v Barilochah – oni vsi med sabo govorijo po slovensko. In vsaka čast /.../ Sem videla pri moji sestrični, pa govori po slovensko z otroci. In ko so oni zraven, govorimo po slovensko, kar je včasih malo čudno. Si mislimo: Zakaj naenkrat spremeniš, saj smo sicer vedno govorili po špansko? Ampak se potem navadiš in tako je prav. Ker drugače se je jezik počasi, na žalost, izgublja« (Intervjuvanka G, 2022).

Vstop v argentinski šolski sistem, kjer je prevladovala španščina, je bil za večino intervjuvancev prelomna točka v znanju tega jezika. Nekateri intervjuvanci (npr. F in G) so tako izpostavili, da se po vstopu in koncu šolanja v Argentini tudi v slovenskem okolju pogovarjajo v španskem jeziku, kar odraža kompleksnost njihove identitete:

»/.../ (domače) okolje je bilo bolj slovensko kot argentinsko. Ko začneš šolo, pa začne argentinska kultura prevladovati« (Intervjuvanec F, 2022).

»Ko govorim, mi je lažje španščina. Ampak zakaj? Ker sem celo šolanje imela v španščini. In jaz mislim, da ti pusti velik vpliv. Ko berem, mi je lažje, ker sem se v tem jeziku učila in v tem okolju odraščala« (Intervjuvanka G, 2022).

V nadaljevanju smo z raziskavo poskusili osvetliti tudi raznolikost narodne identitete med slovensko skupnostjo v Argentini. Intervjuji razkrivajo štiri glavne načine opredeljevanja narodne identitete slovenske skupnosti v Argentini: dvojna identiteta, slovenska identiteta, sestavljena identiteta in identiteta potomcev slovenskih priseljencev. Večina intervjuvancev je izrazila občutenje dvojne identitete. To so tako posamezniki s popolnoma slovenskimi predniki kot tudi tisti iz mešanih zakonov. Večina izmed njih, tudi intervjuvanci H, B in J, je izpostavila težave in negotovost pri opredeljevanju svoje narodne identitete:

»To je najtežje vprašanje po mojem, ker ne vem odgovora. Te vprašajo, ali se čutiš Slovenca ali Argentinca, pa ne veš, ali se počutiš oboje ali nobeno /.../ Je malo posebna zadeva. Sem oboje« (Intervjuvanec H, 2022).

»Problem je – ker ne vem. In v najstništvu sem se to definitivno spraševal. Zdaj ne več, zdaj se ne ukvarjam več s tem. V bistvu sem se nehal ukvarjati s tem vprašanjem, sem pa bil v dilemi. Ponavadi sem prišel do zaključka, da v Argentini sem Slovenec, v Sloveniji pa sem Argentinec« (Intervjuvanec B, 2022).

»Tam smo se čutili Slovenci, ker nismo bili čisto Argentinci. /.../ Imeli smo veliko slovenskih navad. Smo bili Slovenci v Argentini. Potem pa prideš sem in se tudi čutiš tako malo, nisi ne eno ne drugo. Nisi čisto nekaj v celoti, si oboje vseskozi« (Intervjuvanka J, 2022).

Nekaj intervjuvancev se je identificiralo predvsem kot Slovenci in so izpostavili svojo slovensko identiteto. To so posamezniki, ki so se rodili v Sloveniji in se kasneje preselili v Argentino, kot tudi tisti, ki so se rodili v Argentini, a so bili aktivno vključeni v tamkajšnjo slovensko skupnost:

»Jaz zase že skoraj moram reči, da sem Slovenka. V sebi imam še vseeno en zelo velik del Argentine, ampak smo se v tako pomembnih letih preselili, da pač nisem več doma-doma v Argentini /.../« (Intervjuvanka E, 2022).

Tretji so v intervjujih izražali svojo večplastno, torej sestavljeno ali in-in identiteto (Milharčič Hladnik, 2011; Vižintin, 2015), ki združuje slovenske, argentinske in druge kulturne elemente. Ti so se identificirali z več kulturami hkrati, odražajoč raznoliko dediščino:

»Moji geni so pravi koktejl, po očetovi strani sem Slovenka, po mamini pa Argentinka in Perujka. S tem, da je moj ded, mamin oče, bil na pol Indijanec. Ponosna sem na to nenavadno, a hkrati zanimivo kombinacijo, zato se počutim prav vse, Argentinka, Slovenka, Perujka in tudi Indijanka« (Intervjuvanka D, 2022).

Spet drugi pa so potomci slovenskih priseljencev, ki čutijo posebno vez z Argentino, čeprav so se rodili in odraščali v Sloveniji, zato smo njihovo identiteto poimenovali kot identiteto potomcev slovenskih priseljencev. V opisu jo tako opredeljuje intervjuvanka P:

»V mojem otroštvu sta imela starša zelo očiten naglas in mi je bilo vedno, tako, malo zoprno. Vedno, ko sta kakšno berilo brala, so vsi vedeli, tudi če ju niso poznali, da nista od tukaj. Tako da sem se vedno malo tujko počutila, čeprav sem tukaj rojena. Cela njuna identiteta je bila malo izseljenska, kljub temu da je bilo vedno cilj sem priti in biti Slovenec /.../ (Intervjuvanka P, 2022).

Intervjuvanci so svojo narodno identiteto povezovali s kraji rojstva, dolžino bivanja v določeni državi, jezikom, kulturnimi značilnostmi in stiki s sorodniki ter prijatelji v Argentini. Rezultati raziskave kažejo na kompleksnost opredeljevanja narodne identitete med priseljenci slovenske skupnosti iz Argentine in poudarjajo vpliv medkulturnih interakcij na oblikovanje narodne identitete.

V kontekstu naše raziskave o migracijskih izkušnjah slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev iz Argentine v Slovenijo, smo analizirali vlogo predhodnih stikov in obiskov Slovenije na njihovo odločitev za selitev. Večina intervjuvancev je pred selitvijo vzdrževala redne stike s sorodniki, prijatelji in znanci v Sloveniji. Takih stikov so se posluževali preko različnih komunikacijskih kanalov: v preteklosti preko pisem in telefonskih klicev, v novejšem času pa preko spletnih platform in aplikacij ter družabnih omrežij. Iz rezultatov naše raziskave izhaja, da je devet intervjuvancev Slovenijo pred selitvijo obiskalo ob različnih priložnostih – družinske počitnice, obiski sorodnikov in prijateljev, družinska praznovanja, maturantski izleti in izobraževanja (npr. tečaji za učitelje slovenskega jezika). Te izkušnje so na mnoge intervjuvance naredile močan vtis, pri nekaterih pa celo vzbudile globoko čustveno željo po selitvi v Slovenijo. Tako svojo izkušnjo obiska Slovenije opisuje Intervjuvanec H:

»V Sloveniji sem bil prvič leta 1997, ko sem bil star 13 let. Smo bili z družino tukaj, za cel mesec na obisku pri družini in tako. In je bilo tako fajn, da sem se kar jokal, ko smo morali iti. Takrat sem kar mislil ali pa vedel ali pa si želel, da bi prišel sem« (Intervjuvanec H, 2022).

Opis poudarja pomen osebnih izkušenj in čustvene povezanosti z državo izvora pri odločitvi o selitvi. Podkrepi tudi dejstvo, da se odločitve za selitev ne oblikujejo zgolj na osnovi ekonomskih ali političnih razlogov, temveč tudi skozi osebne in čustvene vezi.

6.2 Selitev v Slovenijo

V drugem delu raziskave smo se osredotočili na sam proces selitve. Najprej nas je zanimala časovna dimenzija povratne selitve oziroma priseljevanja v Slovenijo. Naš vzorec intervjuvancev odraža različne valove povratnih selitev oziroma priseljevanja, ki so povezani z značilnimi obdobji selitev, ki smo jih v uvodnih delih tega prispevka tudi opisali. Iz rezultatov intervjujev lahko identificiramo štiri obdobja priseljevanja v Slovenijo:

- po letu 1991: ena intervjuvanka se je s svojo družino priselila v Slovenijo v obdobju po osamosvojitvi Slovenije,
- po letu 2002: trije intervjuvanci so se priselili v Slovenijo po gospodarski krizi v Argentini leta 2002,
- v letih 2012–2019: priselitve posameznih intervjuvancev v Slovenijo zaradi različnih razlogov,
- leta 2022: največ intervjuvancev (5) se je priselilo v Slovenijo v omenjenem letu, ki nakazuje na možen nov val priseljevanja po epidemiji covid-19, ki pa ga, kot smo uvodoma pisali, zaenkrat ne beleži še nobena strokovna ali znanstvena literatura, ga pa je v našem intervjuju opisal intervjuvanec H:

»/.../ vse več argentinskih Slovencev se vrača. Lani je bilo noro. Vsak mesec tri, štiri, pet celih družin. Stalno slišiš za koga.« (Intervjuvanec H, 2022).

V okviru raziskave so nas zanimali tudi razlogi slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev za priselitev iz Argentine. Večina intervjuvancev je kot primarni razlog za preselitev navedla ekonomsko situacijo v Argentini, sledi poslabšanje splošne varnosti in porast kriminala. Intervjuvanec B je v intervjuju opisal več incidentov, povezanih s kriminalom, ki so vplivali na odločitev za selitev:

»/.../ je bil pa definitivno eden od razlogov tudi kriminal. Mami so, recimo, oropali. Vem, da je enkrat hodila po ulici, prišel je motorist z nožem in ji vzel torbico. Ampak to je klasika v Argentini. /.../ Potem so nam avto ukradli pred hišo« (Intervjuvanec B, 2022).

Tisti, ki so se priselili samski, so v intervjujih poudarili, da je na odločitev o preselitvi vplivalo iskanje možnosti za boljše osebno ali karierno napredovanje, medtem ko so starši, ki so se preselili z družinami, pogosto izrazili željo po zagotavljanju boljše prihodnosti za svoje otroke. Intervjuvanka J je poudarila pomen družine in žrtvovanja za boljše možnosti otrok:

»Smo rekli, da za njih, zaradi njih pojdimo vsi skupaj. Pojdimo kot družina. /.../ Za nas, družina je važna. Da onadva lahko rasteta z družino, midva danes morava žrtvovati to. Mi moramo za seboj pustiti pa spet začeti, na novo, da bosta onadva v življenju lahko imela kaj boljšega. To je bilo najbolj važno, da bosta onadva imela več možnosti na svetu« (Intervjuvanka J, 2022).

Odločitve za selitev so bile pogosto odvisne tudi od že dogovorjenih delovnih mest ali štipendij v Sloveniji. Intervjuvanka E je poudarila, da brez zagotovljene zaposlitve selitev ne bi bila možna:

»Odločitev smo sprejeli, ko je že imel potrjeno, da je dobil (službo), ko so manjkala le še končna pogajanja. Če ne bi on te službe dobil, se po mojem takrat ne bi preselili« (Intervjuvanka E, 2022).

Del intervjuvancev (5) je omenil slovenstvo, domoljubje in slovenske korenine kot pomemben dejavnik pri odločitvi za selitev, vendar nikoli kot edini ali primarni razlog, kar z opisom poudari tudi intervjuvanka A:

»(Starši) so bili v celoti Slovenci – odraščali so sicer v argentinskem svetu in tako, ampak se mi zdi, da so imeli to zavedanje, od kod prihajajo, zaradi svojih staršev. Onadva sta imela v ozadju v zavesti, da se bodo vrnili. No, in potem sta se res 'vrnila'. /.../ Sigurno je pripomogla tudi argentinska ekonomska nestabilnost. /.../ Glavni razlog je bil zagotovo, da je dobil oči službo« (Intervjuvanka A, 2022).

Rezultati so pokazali, da so bile odločitve za selitev iz Argentine v Slovenijo pogosto večplastne, s kombinacijo ekonomskih, varnostnih in družinskih dejavnikov, ki so vplivali na končno odločitev o preselitvi.

V nadaljevanju nas je zanimalo, kateri dejavniki so pri slovenskih izseljencih iz Argentine in njihovih potomcih vplivali na izbiro kraja bivanja v Sloveniji. Večina intervjuvancev je izpostavila, da so pri izbiri kraja bivanja prednostno iskali dobre prometne povezave do Ljubljane, intervjuvanki A in D pa sta poudarili željo po naravnem okolju in dobri prometni dostopnosti:

»/.../ ati (je) iskal nekaj, kar bi bilo podobno Bariločam, z veliko narave, nekaj vode, da se da plavati. Mislim, da mu je bilo pomembno, da smo v naravi, ne pa tudi odrežani od glavnega mesta« (Intervjuvanka A, 2022).

»V mislih nismo imeli specifičnega kraja. Seveda smo iskali miren in lep kraj, vendar smo bili predvsem pozorni dobro povezavo, na relativno bližino Ljubljane, na bližino potrebne infrastrukture za vsakdanje življenje« (Intervjuvanka D, 2022).

Raziskava je pokazala tudi razlike v krajih priselitve med individualnimi in družinskimi priselitvami. Posamezniki, ki so se priselili samostojno, so pogosto izbrali bližino urbanim središčem, predvsem Ljubljani, zaradi živahnosti in dogajanja. Nasprotno so se tisti, ki so se priselili s celotnimi družinami, odločili za mirnejša, bolj naravna okolja izven večjih urbanih središč. Prvotni kraj priselitve je bil za 10 intervjuvancev v Osrednjeslovenski statistični regiji, trije so se priselili v statistično regijo Jugovzhodna Slovenija, en pa v Goriško. Kljub vsemu moramo izpostaviti, da so bile nadaljnje notranje selitve pogoste, pri čemer so se posamezniki, ki so se priselili v Slovenijo sami, večinoma preselili bliže Ljubljani, medtem ko so se družine preselile v bolj podeželska in suburbana območja. Raziskava je pokazala, da prvotni kraj bivanja prednikov ni imel opaznega vpliva na izbiro kraja bivanja priseljencev, le trije intervjuvanci so izpostavili, da so se preselili v bližino krajev, kjer so živeli njihovi predniki, a je pri tem šlo bolj za naključje kot namerno odločitev.

V raziskavi nas je zanimalo tudi, kako so slovenski izseljenci iz Argentine in njihovi potomci izkoristili različne vire pomoči in podpore pri svoji priselitvi v Slovenijo. Analizirali smo, kako so socialne mreže, družinski člani, sorodniki in institucionalne strukture vplivali na potek selitvenega procesa. Večina intervjuvancev je navedla, da so bili stiki s sorodniki, prijatelji in znanci v Sloveniji ključnega pomena pri selitvi. Ti stiki so zagotavljali ne le moralno in čustveno podporo, ampak tudi praktično pomoč, kot so nasveti, pomoč pri iskanju bivališča in integraciji v novo socialno okolje. Intervjuvanka J, ki se je priselila v Slovenijo leta 2022, je izpostavila pomembno vlogo Facebook skupine »Argentinos en Eslovenia« in slovenskega veleposlaništva v Buenos Airesu pri pridobivanju slovenskega državljanstva za njene otroke. Intervjuvanka C, ki se je priselila leta 2003, pa je izpostavila podporo Karitasa. Intervjuvanci so pogosto omenjali tudi pomoč »dobrih ljudi«, ki so jim pomagali pri urejanju dokumentacije, iskanju bivališča in vključevanju v slovensko družbo. Ta vidik poudarja pomen skupnosti in solidarnosti med ljudmi, ki so pripravljene pomagati novopriseljenim. Poleg moralne podpore so nekateri intervjuvanci izpostavili tudi finančno in logistično pomoč, ki so jo prejeli od svojih sorodnikov in prijateljev in je bila ključnega pomena pri lažjem prehodu in prilagajanju na novo socialno okolje. Rezultati so pokazali, kako raznolike oblike podpore prispevajo k uspešnosti priselitve in integraciji slovenskih izseljencev iz Argentine v slovensko družbo. Poudarjajo pomen socialnih mrež in solidarnosti kot ključnih dejavnikov pri migracijskih procesih.

Na podlagi intervjujev smo ugotovili, da je imela večina intervjuvancev pred selitvijo v Slovenijo že urejeno slovensko državljanstvo. Kljub temu so nekateri morali urediti dokumentacijo za svoje družinske člane. Intervjuvanci so izpostavili zadovoljstvo nad delovanjem slovenskega sistema in pripravljenostjo ljudi pomagati,

čepprav so nekateri imeli težave pri nostrifikaciji diplom za določene poklice, kar je izpostavil tudi intervjuvanec F:

»To, kar imam jaz, visoko šolo, bi moral tu delati še enkrat. Javni sektor te ne zaposli, če nimaš vsaj diplome. To je malo hecno, ker ni nujno, da če imaš diplomu, da boš dovolj dober. Razumem za enega zdravnika, ampak to ni isto« (Intervjuvanec F, 2022).

Iskanje bivališča je večinoma potekalo s pomočjo sorodnikov, znancev in prijateljev, ki so že živeli v Sloveniji. To je vključevalo pomoč pri iskanju, deljenje informacij in v nekaterih primerih tudi ponudbo bivanja. Večina priseljencev si je bivališče uredila že pred selitvijo, s čimer so se izognili večjim težavam pri iskanju.

Kar se tiče zaposlitve, so nekateri intervjuvanci delo našli že pred prihodom v Slovenijo, medtem ko drugi dela v svoji stroki niso dobili ali pa so naleteli na že prej izpostavljene težave, povezane s priznavanjem izobrazbe in nostrifikacijo diplom. Nekoliko daljši postopki iskanja zaposlitve so bili pogosti pri družinskih članih argentinskega porekla, kar je bilo povezano z jezikovnimi ovirami in pridobivanjem potrebne dokumentacije.

Glede šolanja so nekateri intervjuvanci in njihovi družinski člani nadaljevali izobraževanje po selitvi, pri čemer so se soočali z jezikovnimi ovirami, kar izpostavi tudi intervjuvanec I. Tako so bili dodatni tečajji slovenskega jezika po priselitvi v nekaterih primerih nujni za uspešno vključitev v slovenski šolski sistem:

»Po prihodu sem se v šoli slovenščino sproti učil, potem pa sem vsak petek imel Zoom, take govorilne ure, tako da sem vadil slovenščino, ker smo bili v karanteni in nisem imel tega stika« (Intervjuvanec I, 2022).

6.3 Življenje v Sloveniji

Rezultati raziskave so pokazali, da ima pri vključevanju v slovensko družbo starost ob priselitvi zelo pomembno vlogo. Tisti, ki so se v času šolanja priselili in vključevali v novo okolje v Sloveniji, so pogosto naleteli na večje izzive integracije, vključno z občutki izolacije in šolskim nadlegovanjem. Čeprav se je večina sčasoma počutila sprejeta, so nekateri izrazili, da je bil proces prilagajanja dolgotrajen, še posebej za tiste, ki so se v šolah vključevali v že obstoječe skupine (razrede), večji izzivi so bili opaženi predvsem v zadnjem triletju osnovnošolskega izobraževanja, kar sta izpostavili tudi intervjuvanki E in C:

»Prišla sem v deveti razred, padla sem v čisto že formirano grupo, ki samo še čaka, da gre. Ni ravno okolje, ki bi sprejemalo prišleke. V resnici sem celo leto samo čakala, da bo osnovne šole konec« (Intervjuvanka E, 2022).

»Lagala bi, če bi rekla, da je bilo vključevanje v socialno okolje lahko, sploh pri taki starosti, vsaj zase lahko povem, no. Vem, da smo imeli kar nekaj težav v prvi šoli, kamor smo se preselili, da smo doživeli tudi bullying, sicer nič drastičnega, ampak ja. Zame osebno je bilo tudi težko, ker je bila velika sprememba, preseliti se v okolje, kjer ljudje v splošnem niso tako odprti in so krogi nekih zaprtih skupin« (Intervjuvanka C, 2022).

Kljub vsemu je večina intervjuvancev, ki so se priselili v Slovenijo v kasnejših življenjskih obdobjih, poročala o pretežno pozitivnih izkušnjah integracije, kar so pripisali obstoječim mrežam stikov v državi. Te mreže so jim omogočile hitrejšo vključevanje v novo socialno okolje, kot pripoveduje tudi intervjuvanec F:

»Zelo sem se čutil sprejetega, brez težav. Najprej sem navezal stike z znanci in sorodniki, ampak se spomnim tudi, da sem takoj navezal stike v službi« (Intervjuvanec F, 2022).

Kljub temu so intervjuvanci izpostavili določene izzive, kot so medkulturne razlike in prilagajanje slovenskemu jeziku. Nekateri so omenili (npr. intervjuvanec O) velik razkorak med svojim znanjem slovenskega jezika, ki so se ga naučili in govorili v Argentini in sodobno slovenščino, ki se danes govori v Sloveniji.

»Pa tudi vse ne zastopim, kar tu pravijo. /.../ Jezik se je v Argentini ustavil v času. Tudi mi vemo prec, ko kakšen Slovenec pride v Argentino, da je Slovenec ... ker govori slovensko! Ne pa to, kar mi mešamo. Zadnje trideset let je Slovenija šla naprej« (Intervjuvanec O, 2022).

V raziskavi smo ugotovili, da intervjuvanci v večini uporabljajo slovenščino predvsem v formalnih situacijah, kot je javno nastopanje ali komunikacija s starejšimi družinskimi člani, medtem ko med vrstniki prevladuje raba španščine. V pogovorih z drugimi argentinskimi priseljenci prevladuje španščina ali kombinacija obeh jezikov, ki jih pogosto mešajo, kar je intervjuvanka P opisala kot »slovežanščino« - mešanico španščine in slovenščine. Na podlagi rezultatov intervjujev domnevamo, da je jezik sporazumevanja v domačem okolju v Sloveniji odvisen od jezikovnih navad v Argentini, osebnih odločitev in dolžine bivanja v Sloveniji. Večina priseljencev se zavestno odloča za ohranjanje španščine doma, kar je potrdil tudi intervjuvanec B, ki je povedal, da doma večinoma govorijo špansko, da bi ohranili povezavo z argentinsko družino:

»Doma, tukaj v Sloveniji, mi večinoma govorimo špansko. Zakaj? Večinoma zato, ker ko se je leta 2003 rodil moj brat in leta 2006 še en brat, sem jaz doma težil, da govorimo špansko. Če ne je dostikrat tako, da ko si v takem mešanem okolju, pride do ene mešanice, španske slovenščine, ki so jo govorili moji brati. In tako smo dejansko doma govorili več špansko. Zato, da tudi oni dobro znajo in da se lahko skonektajo z družino po mamini strani v Argentini, večinoma zaradi tega. Mi danes govorimo med sabo zgolj in le špansko, seveda, kako besedo tudi po slovensko« (Intervjuvanec B, 2022).

Po drugi strani pa sta intervjuvanki A in E povedali, da so prakso sporazumevanja v španščini opustili in doma večinoma govorijo slovensko:

»Probali smo en dan v tednu imeti v španščini. Ampak, kot sem že rekla, meni je tako nenaravno govoriti s svojimi starši v španščini« (Intervjuvanka E, 2022).

»Mami mi je rekla, da ko smo prišli sem, ji na pameti ni padlo, da bi z nami govorila po špansko, ker je pač naš materni jezik slovenščina. Šele potem, ko smo bili malo večji, nas je poskušala malo naučiti in imela španske urice z nami, ampak ne kaj veliko« (Intervjuvanka A, 2022).

Priseljenci iz Argentine v Sloveniji ohranjajo tudi nekatere argentinske navade in običaje. Najpogosteje omenjena je priprava argentinskih jedi, pitje čaja mate, argentinskih vin. Prav tako je med priseljenci priljubljeno spremljanje nogometa, kar deset intervjuvancev je to opisalo kot tipično argentinsko navado, ki jo še vedno gojijo:

»Fuzbal gledam in mi je všeč, ker v Argentini je to noro. Kot religija. Predvsem za Mundial. Za svetovno prvenstvo, si bom vzel dopust, če se da. Malo se hecam, ampak malo je pa res. Tisti dan, ko igra Argentina, ne bom šel v službo« (Intervjuvanec H, 2022).

Proces ohranjanja argentinske kulture med priseljenci iz Argentine v Sloveniji zrcali obratni proces ohranjanja slovenske kulture, ki so ga ti posamezniki in družine prakticali v Argentini pred selitvijo v Slovenijo. Zanimivo je, da so v Argentini aktivno ohranjali slovenski jezik in slovenske navade, medtem ko v Sloveniji nekateri skrbijo za ohranjanje španskega jezika in argentinske kulture. Ta vzorec ohranjanja kulturne dediščine, skupaj z medsebojnim povezovanjem, prispeva k oblikovanju edinstvene argentinsko-slovenske priseljske skupnosti. Ta skupnost ima značilnosti in strategije ohranjanja kulture, ki so podobne tistim, ki jih je razvila slovenska izseljska skupnost v Argentini, kar priča o pomenu ohranjanja kulturne identitete v spreminjajočem se okolju.

V raziskavi so nas zanimale tudi interakcije intervjuvancev z ostalimi slovenskimi priseljenci iz Argentine, zanimalo nas je, kako pogosto se srečujejo in v kakšnih okoliščinah. Ugotovili smo, da imajo intervjuvanci redna srečanja tako v formalnih kot neformalnih okvirih. Formalna srečanja vključujejo obiske argentinskih maš in dogodke, ki jih organizira Izseljsko društvo Slovenija v svetu. To društvo prireja različne dogodke, kot so romanje na Brezje, praznovanje ob argentinskem državnem prazniku 25. maja, gledališke predstave in koncerte. Opazili smo, da se v aktivnosti društva bolj vključujejo novopriseljenci, medtem ko tisti, ki so se v Slovenijo priselili prej, pogosto najdejo druge načine za vzpostavljanje socialnih mrež izven teh formalnih srečanj. Kljub naštetim formalnim srečanjem prevladujejo neformalna srečanja, ki vključujejo družinske in prijateljske dogodke.

V raziskavi smo preučevali tudi, kako intervjuvanci ohranjajo transnacionalne povezave z Argentino. Ugotovili smo, da vsi intervjuvanci redno ohranjajo stike s sorodniki in prijatelji v Argentini, pri čemer prevladuje komunikacija preko družabnih omrežij, en intervjuvanec pa je izpostavil, da s starimi starši, ki so v Argentini, komunicira preko telefonskih klicev. Pogosti so tudi obiski med državama, dva intervjuvanca sta poudarila, da obiskujeta Argentino večkrat, posebej zdaj, ko sta finančno zmožna.

V raziskavi nas je zanimala tudi dolgoročnost bivanja slovenskih priseljencev iz Argentine. Pet intervjuvancev je od samega začetka načrtovalo stalno prebivanje v Sloveniji, nasprotno pa je devet intervjuvancev prvotno imelo namen, da bi v Sloveniji bivali le začasno ali kot poskusno obdobje. Kljub temu so v času našega intervjuja večinoma izrazili namero, da v Sloveniji ostanejo trajno. Intervjuvanec H je na primer povedal, da se je sprva odločil za poskusno bivanje v Sloveniji, vendar se je sčasoma odločil za stalno prebivanje:

»/.../ nisem imel čisto namena, da bi bilo stalno. Sem rekel: »Dajmo poskusiti.« /.../ je bilo nekako še odprta možnost, a počasi pa sem spoznal, da je tudi tu fajn. Zdaj letos, konec lanskega leta, sem se sprijaznil, sem rekel: 'To je to.' Je fajn, mislim, nimam razloga, da bi šel drugam. Če kaj slabo rata, mogoče bom pomislil na to, ampak namen je ostati za stalno« (Intervjuvanec H, 2022).

Dve intervjuvanki sta poudarili, da ponovna selitev v Argentino v prihodnosti ni izključena:

»Jaz potrebujem, da čutim, da spadam – tam, kjer živim. Zaradi tega je zame ali Argentina ali Slovenija. Ampak je vseeno težko reči, da bomo tu živeli celo življenje. Iskreno ne vem, kaj se bo zgodilo. /.../ Če se karkoli zgodi z našimi starši in potrebujejo, da si tam zraven in paziš. /.../ In če se karkoli zgodi, smo mi pripravljeni, da vse pustimo in gremo« (Intervjuvanka G, 2022).

Ostali intervjuvanci ne razmišljajo in ne načrtujejo vrnitve v Argentino, razen v okviru obiskov ali potovanj. Trije intervjuvanci, ki so bili v času intervjuja še dijaki, pa so izrazili željo po selitvi v druge države, kot so Španija, Nemčija ali Avstrija, zaradi ekonomskih in kariernih priložnosti.

7 ZAKLJUČEK

Naše raziskovanje slovenskih izseljencev in potomcev slovenskih izseljencev iz Argentine, ki so se priselili v Slovenijo, je nakazalo več pomembnih ugotovitev, ki po eni strani potrjujejo tiste, ki so bile raziskane v letu 2006, po drugi strani pa jih dopolnjujejo in nadgrajujejo. Razgovori z intervjuvanci potrjujejo več valov priseljevanja v

Slovenijo, ki so bili intenzivnejši posebej po osamosvojitvi Slovenije leta 1991 in po gospodarski krizi v Argentini okoli leta 2000, o čemer sta pisala tudi Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) in Repič (2006). Naša raziskava pa je razkrila nov priselitveni val slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev iz Argentine v obdobju po epidemiji covid-19, ki nakazuje, da se proces povratnih selitev omenjene skupnosti še vedno nadaljuje in nikakor ni zanemarljiv ter bi mu veljalo v prihodnosti nameniti več raziskovalne pozornosti.

Ugotovili smo, da so se v Slovenijo priselili predvsem tisti izseljenci in potomci, ki so bili aktivno vključeni v slovensko izseljensko skupnost v Argentini, kar sta poudarila v svojih raziskavah tudi Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) in Repič (2006). Ohranjanje jezikovnih in kulturnih praks je bilo pomembno za vključevanje v slovensko družbo, vendar kot sprožilec povratne selitve ni prevladoval. Glavni vzrok za preselitev je bila po naših ugotovitvah gospodarska situacija v Argentini, skupaj z vprašanji varnosti in željo po zagotavljanju boljših možnosti za prihodnost otrok.

V okviru opredeljevanja narodne identitete so intervjuvanci poudarili svojo slovensko identiteto, dvojno identiteto, sestavljeno identiteto in identiteto potomcev slovenskih priseljencev. Večina potomcev slovenskih priseljencev iz Argentine občuti razdvojenost v opredeljevanju svoje narodne identitete, čeprav to ne velja za vse. Nekateri se identificirajo z dvojno ali sestavljeno identiteto, kar odraža njihovo mešano poreklo. Poudariti velja, da je opredeljevanje narodne identitete slovenske diaspore precej bolj kompleksno in zapleteno kot je pri običajnem državljanu, pripadniku večinskega naroda v svoji državi.

Raziskava je prav tako potrdila, da priseljenci iz Argentine aktivno vzpostavljajo transnacionalne povezave med Slovenijo in Argentino. Ohranjajo stike s prijatelji, sorodniki in znanci ter izvajajo obiske in potovanja med obema državama. Nekateri ne izključujejo možnosti ponovne selitve v Argentino, kar kaže na dinamično naravo transnacionalnih selitvenih procesov.

Naše ugotovitve kažejo na kompleksnost in večplastnost migracijskih izkušenj slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev iz Argentine. Kljub vsemu je treba poudariti, da je bila naša raziskava kvalitativna in je temeljila na biografsko-interpretivni narativni metodi, ki prinaša drugačen vpogled v sicer »tradicionalno«¹ preučevanje migracij. V okviru kvalitativnega raziskovanja stremimo predvsem k odkrivanju posebnosti, drugačnosti, netipičnosti, kar težje raziskujemo s t. i. tradicionalnim kvantitativnim raziskovanjem. Življenjske zgodbe, ki smo jih uporabili tudi pri našem raziskovanju, že same po sebi uporabljajo manjši, netipični vzorec, katerega odgovorov ne moremo posploševati in navezovati na celo populacijo tistih slovenskih izseljencev in njihovih potomcev, ki so se priselili iz Argentine. Zagotovo pa so lahko rezultati naše raziskave podlaga za nadaljnje raziskovanje povratnih selitev slovenske diaspore in njihove integracije v priselitveno okolje.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RETURN MIGRATION OF THE SLOVENIAN DIASPORA FROM ARGENTINA

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Abstract

This article deals with the return migration of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants from Argentina. The first part of the article provides a general overview of return migration, which takes place in the context of globalisation and increasing migration flows as a reaction to changing life circumstances, economic opportunities or as a result of the search for personal and cultural identity, as well as the background and historical context of Slovenian emigration to Argentina and outlines the characteristics of the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina. In the second part, we present the analysis and interpretation of the results of the data collected through semi-structured interviews using the biographical-interpretative narrative method with Slovenian immigrants from Argentina who represent a specific community in Slovenia and maintain transnational links with Argentina.

Keywords: Slovenian emigration, diaspora, return migration, Argentina, Slovenia, national identity

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1 INTRODUCTION

Although migrations have occurred throughout human history, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that they became the focus of scientific research. Since then, they have taken an increasingly important place in various scientific disciplines such as sociology, geography, anthropology, economics and others (King, 1978; Lukšič-Hacin, 2010) and have developed into a »distinctly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field of research« (Ilc Klun, 2014, p. 166). Despite the growing popularity of migration research, the topic of return migration remained on the margins of research for a long time, as it was mostly discussed or mentioned in the context of broader migration processes, but almost never as a main topic of academic research (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006b; Mlekuž, 2003). The migration of the descendants of emigrants has been dealt with even less frequently. Traditionally, migration studies have focused on the first generation of migrants, while the descendants have mostly been mentioned in the context of the challenges of integration or assimilation (King, Christou, 2011).

Recently, interest in research on return migration has increased and consolidated its place within migration studies (Bilecen, 2022; Gemi, Triandafyllidou, 2021; King, Kuschminder, 2022). King and Christou (2011, p. 452) argue that this trend is not due to an actual increase in migration flows, but rather represents a »reconceptualization of migration phenomena« within the framework of new paradigms such as transnationality. However, King and Kuschminder (2022) conclude that return migration is still not a central topic in the migration studies literature and that more attention should be paid to return migration in research studies at both global and national levels.

In Slovenia, there was less interest in researching the return migration of the Slovenian diaspora. Research on this process took place mainly in three periods: in the second half of the 1970s, when some works dealt mainly with the return of Slovenian »zdomci«¹ from Germany to Slovenia (Toplak, 2004), in the 1990s (Žigon, 1998), when there was a slightly increased rate of remigration as a result of Slovenia's independence, and around the turn of the millennium (Lukšič-Hacin 2006a; 2006b; Repič, 2006; Žigon, 2001). Nevertheless, return migration of the Slovenian diaspora is mainly considered in the academic and professional literature as part of the broader research on the Slovenian diaspora. It is also a fact that the concept of return migration is hardly known to the general public (Ilc Klun, 2014).

To fill this research gap, our 2022 study investigated the return migration of Slovenian emigrants in Argentina and the migration of the descendants of Slovenian emigrants in Argentina to Slovenia, focusing on a holistic understanding of the processes before, during and after return migration. Research on return migration has taken into account the multidimensionality and complexity of the process. This required an interdisciplinary approach combining geographical, sociological, economic and historical

1 At this point, it should be noted that contemporary migration research does not classify »zdomci« as returning migrants, as they have only gone abroad temporarily.

research perspectives. In addition, the inclusion of (return) migrants in the research process was crucial, as their personal experiences and perspectives contributed significantly to a comprehensive understanding of the (return) migration process.

The study of return migration of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants is important because understanding these processes gives us insights into contemporary migration trends, including those of the Slovenian diaspora, and provides an understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of migration processes in which Slovenia has been and is involved over different periods of time.

2 TERMINOLOGY

In the domestic and foreign literature on return migration, various terms are used to describe this process. In Slovenian literature, which also summarises foreign literature, we can find terms such as reverse migration, return migration (Mlekuž, 2006; 2021), remigration (Ilc Klun, 2014), reemigration, repatriation, return migration (IOM, 2006), while in English literature we can mainly find terms such as counterstream migration, reverse migration, u-turn migration, homeward migration and so on. It should be noted that these terms are not completely synonymous. For example, the Slovenian term »povratništvo« is used in Slovenian literature as a synonym for return migration, but the word »povratnik«, which is derived from the term »povratništvo«, can also have a negative connotation and refers, among other things, to someone who »has already been convicted but commits a new offence« (SSKJ, 2022), so it is not directly associated with the process of migration as such. The term repatriation also allows for different interpretations. The term is derived from the Latin word *repatriare*, which means »to return home« (Gombač, 2006), while the Geographical Terminology Dictionary (2022) describes repatriation as »the return of emigrants, the population living on the territory of another country or in another area within one's own country, to their home country, the place of their original residence«. Today, the term repatriation has mainly a political connotation and is used in literature and the media to describe the return of refugees and prisoners of war to the country of which they are citizens (IOM, 2006). The Glossary on Migration (IOM, 2006, p. 62) also describes repatriation as a personal right of the refugee or prisoner of war, and that »the option of repatriation is a personal decision of the individual, not of the state. Repatriation also includes the obligation of the state to allow authorised persons (soldiers and civilians) to leave and the obligation of the state of origin to accept its own nationals. Repatriation also applies to diplomatic representatives and international personnel in times of international crisis«. Gombač (2006) notes that repatriation was part of the social reality in Slovenia, especially after the Second World War, when Yugoslav and foreign citizens returned (via Slovenia) to their home countries. In order to avoid terminological inconsistencies, we therefore suggest using the term »return migration« or its

Slovenian equivalent »povratna migracija«, to refer to those migrants who return after a certain period of residence outside their country of origin, return migrants.

Definitions of return migration as we understand it today date back about half a century (Bilgili, 2022). The 1960s saw the first specific studies focusing exclusively on this migration process, with researchers using the example of return migration from the USA to Italy and from the UK to the Caribbean (King, Kuschminder, 2022).

In the 1970s, the oil crisis that shook the global economy also affected the dynamics of migration processes and triggered a large-scale return migration of workers. Studies that have looked at this process have focused on the reasons for this – deindustrialization, the decline of the Fordist economic model, family choices and the improvement of economic conditions in the migrants' countries of origin (King, Kuschminder 2022). In this context, Frank Bovenkerk (1974) was the first to systematically analyse and theorise return migration in his work »The Sociology of Return Migration«, thus laying the foundation for further research (King, Christou, 2011). Bovenkerk (1974) defines return migration as the process that takes place when people return to their country (or region) of origin after emigrating. In his definition, Bovenkerk therefore only refers to a return migrant as someone who has emigrated from their place of origin and returned to their place of origin after a certain period of time, but not to their descendants who move to their ancestors' place of origin.

In the 1980s, George Gmelch developed one of the first and widely accepted definitions of remigration in his book »Return Migration«, defining it as the movement of migrants back to their home countries with the aim of resettlement (Gmelch, 1980). In the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, migration research became closely linked to the processes of globalisation, as discussed by Castles and Miller (1993) in their work »The Age of Migration«.

Migration has long been understood as a clearly one-way and one-time phenomenon, with return migration seen as a possible final phase in the life of a person who has first emigrated and then re-immigrated (Toplak, 2006). However, a number of authors, including for example Toplak (2006), Lukšič-Hacin (2006a) and King (2015), point out that such a one-sided and static understanding of return migration is too simplistic and does not take into account the complexity of the processes that follow the initial emigration. This is countered by new conceptualizations of return migration, which have sparked a renewed interest in the study of this process in the first decades of the 21st century and which, unlike the earlier understanding of migration as the end of a so-called migration flow, understand return migration as part of a circulation in a transnational space (Gemi, Trinadfyllidou, 2021). This is because migrants maintain strong links between the country of origin and the host country, which shapes transnational identity as they are not anchored (physically, socially, culturally) in either country (Al-Ali, Koser, 2002, as cited in Cassarino, 2004). King

(2015) therefore expands the phases of the migration flow to include *return migration*², *transit migration*³, *re-emigration*⁴, *second migration*⁵ and *circular migration*⁶, thereby emphasising the diversity and complexity of remigration processes that go beyond simple emigration and immigration.

In the 21st century, the definitions of international organisations are also frequently used. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defines return migration as the process of a person's return to their country of origin or habitual residence after a stay abroad of at least one year, which may be voluntary or forced (IOM, 2006). This definition emphasises two dimensions - the temporal dimension (return after a stay of at least one year abroad) and the forced/voluntary dimension.

Since this work deals with the processes of return migration of both emigrants and their descendants, it is worth mentioning that there is also a wide range of terminology and conceptualizations of return migration in this context. In particular, the question of the integration of the descendants of emigrants into the country of origin of their ancestors is controversial and has led to numerous debates between different authors. Some authors associate return migration only with migrants who have returned to their place of origin after a certain period of time, while others include their descendants in the concept of return migration.

In his 1974 work, Bovenkerk highlights ancestral return migration as a specific type of return migration. He defines it as the migration of the descendants of emigrants to the place of origin of their ancestors, citing the Rastafarian »Back to Africa« movement as an example. Although Bovenkerk considers these migrations as a marginal example of return migration, he refers to them as »a return that is not really a return« (Bovenkerk, 1974, p. 19). Conway and Potter (2009) favour the inclusion of the next generation (i.e. descendants) in the notion of return migration, defining this process as multi-generational and referring to it as »next-generation return migration« (Bovenkerk, 1974, p. 19). Conway and Potter (2009) favour the inclusion of the next generation (i.e. descendants) in the notion of return migration, defining this process as ‚multigenerational‘. On the other hand, some other authors (Batič, 2003; Lukšič-Hacin, 2006b; Mlekuž, 2006; Toplak, 2006) argue against this, as they consider that the so-called return migration flow should only cover individual mobility and not multigenerational movements (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006b).

2 This phase refers to migrants who return to their country or region of origin after a longer stay abroad.

3 This phase refers to migrants who move from their first country or region of immigration to another country or region without returning to their country or region of origin.

4 This is the phase in which migrants who have already returned to their country or region of origin return to the country or region in which they previously lived.

5 This phase describes the process in which migrants return to their country or region of origin and migrate again, but not to their previous country or region, but to a different destination.

6 This term refers to migrants who move regularly between their country or region of origin and other destinations. It can also include seasonal migration which depends on climatic conditions or seasonal work.

The migration of descendants of emigrants to the country of origin of their ancestors is often discussed in the context of diaspora studies. Diaspora is defined as an ethnic group that has moved geographically away from its original homeland and is linked by a collective memory, a sense of belonging and a longing for its original homeland (King, Christou, 2011; Tsuda, 2016). In diaspora research, various concepts have developed to describe the migration of the descendants of emigrants to the country of their ancestors. King and Christou (2011) introduce the concept of counter-diaspora migration as a migration that is opposed to the process of diaspora formation. Tsuda (2019) uses the broader concept of diasporic return, which includes the return migration of first and 1.5 generation emigrants⁷ as well as the ethnic return migration of the descendants of emigrants.

To avoid terminological confusion, we will use the term „migration of the descendants of emigrants to the country of origin of their ancestors“ in this paper to describe the case of migration of the descendants of emigrants to the country of origin of their ancestors. However, we will use the term „return migration“ exclusively to describe the migration process of people returning to their country of emigration.

3 SLOVENIAN DIASPORA IN ARGENTINA

According to unofficial estimates, there are currently around 30,000 Slovenian emigrants and their descendants living in Argentina (Slovenes in South America, 2022). The mass migration of Slovenes to this country took place in three main periods: in the second half of the 19th century, during the two world wars and after the Second World War (Žigon, 1998, Slovenes in South America, 2022).

Among the first Slovenians to settle in the territory of present-day Argentina were Jesuit missionaries who arrived there from the mid-17th century (Mislej, 1995). In the second half of the 19th century, Argentina accepted European immigrants for geopolitical (e.g. in 1878 due to intergovernmental agreement between Argentina and Austria Argentina accepted some 200 to 300 families) and economic reasons (e.g. poor agricultural conditions and poor harvests). During this period, around 1000 Slovenians immigrated to Argentina, mostly as Austrian and Italian citizens (Repič, 2006). They settled mainly in the northern provinces of Formosa and Chaco as well as in Entre Ríos and Santa Fe and in the cities of Córdoba, Mendoza and Buenos Aires (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998).

7 Many researchers determine the generational affiliation of families with migration experience based on the genealogical order of births. They assign the parents to the “first generation”, while their children, regardless of their place of birth, are assigned to the “second” or “next generation”. Other authors differentiate the generational affiliation according to the place of birth of the children of immigrants. Those who were born in the country of origin and grew up in the host country are classified as part of the ‘1.5 generation’, while children born in the host country are defined as part of the ‘second’ or ‘next generation’ (Tsuda, 2016).

During the world wars, Argentina experienced another large wave of Slovenian immigration - it is estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 Slovenians immigrated to Argentina at that time (Žigon, 1998; Repič, 2006). The reasons for immigration were initially political (e.g. after 1922 there was an intensive emigration of the Slovenian population from Primorska region to Argentina during Italian fascism), and later also economic (e.g. between 1926 and 1929 as a result of the Great Depression) (Žigon, 1998). Slovenian immigrants mainly settled in the larger cities such as Buenos Aires, Rosario and Córdoba, where they were mainly employed as industrial workers (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998). During this period, Slovenian immigrants also began to organise themselves politically and culturally, they established national homes where they took care of the Slovenian language and education, founded Slovenian associations and published the Slovenian press - Slovenian magazines and other newsletters (Repič, 2006; Žigon, 1998).

After the Second World War, Argentina experienced the last major wave of Slovenian immigration, which was associated with political refugees fleeing the new socio-political order, communism, in Yugoslavia (Žigon, 1998; 2001), hence this wave of immigration is often referred to as »Slovenian political emigration« (Žigon, 1998; 2001). According to Žigon (2001), an estimated 89 Slovene refugees had immigrated to Argentina in 1947, and by 1955, an estimated 5,282 Slovene immigrants had arrived in Argentina, most of them in family groups, but some of them also immigrated independently (Žigon, 2001). The Argentine authorities took a positive view of the new Slovene immigrants, which enabled the Slovene community to organise itself socially and culturally. Seven Slovenian national homes were built in Buenos Aires, where various cultural, sporting, religious and other activities were organised in addition to education.

The Slovenian post-war emigrant community in Argentina still maintains a rich and diverse cultural and social life. Education plays a key role in maintaining the continuity of the community, as it enables the transmission of Slovenian language and culture to the next generation of emigrants and their descendants. In the early stages, the education system consisted mainly of religion and Slovenian courses, which were formalised in 1950 and expanded into official Slovenian elementary school in 1966. Currently, the Slovenian community in Argentina maintains kindergartens, elementary school and secondary schools that offer educational programmes to complement the Argentine school system, including the Slovenian language, Slovenian history, geography, religion and singing (Žigon, 2001).

4 RETURN MIGRATION OF SLOVENIAN EMIGRANTS AND MIGRATION OF THE DESCENDANTS OF SLOVENIAN EMIGRANTS FROM ARGENTINA

Researchers who have studied the return migration of Slovenian emigrants from Argentina and the migration of their descendants describe two major waves of immigration to Slovenia: the first after 1990, particularly immediately after independence, and the second after 2000, following the economic crisis in Argentina (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). Our research has revealed a third wave, which mainly concerns the immigration of descendants of Slovenian emigrants and coincides with the Covid-19 epidemic. Official data on the exact number of people who immigrated to Slovenia in each period is not available. Repič (2006) cites estimates by the Slovenian emigrant association »Slovenia in the World«, according to which around 200 Slovenian emigrants and their descendants immigrated from Argentina after 1990 and around 230 more after the end of the economic crisis in Argentina in 2002 and up to 2005. Today, the association no longer provides estimates of immigration, as many emigrants are now mainly dependent on the help of their acquaintances, relatives and friends already living in Slovenia.

There are very few scientific studies that deal with the return migration of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants from Argentina. Two qualitative studies were carried out in 2006 (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). In the following, we present some of the most important results of both studies, in particular a demographic overview of the target group we studied.

Repič (2006) states in his study that most immigrants who moved from Argentina to Slovenia were integrated into the Slovenian community in Argentina, where they either grew up or had active contact with it. Within this community, they took special care to preserve their knowledge of the Slovenian language, their collective memory of Slovenia as their country of origin and their historical awareness of the political emigration of their ancestors. This contributed to the formation of a strong group identity and a symbolic and spiritual connection to the homeland of Slovenia. The characteristics of the Slovenian community in Argentina had a significant influence on the individual's decision to return migration and on the process of return migration itself. Repič (2006) describes that for many, migration meant a »return to Slovenian roots« (ibid., p. 170), and points out that some Argentine-born immigrants referred to themselves as »returnees« when they arrived in Slovenia, as this allowed them to legitimise their origins and belonging (Repič, 2006), most felt that they were immigrants in Slovenia despite their Slovenian citizenship (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c). Both surveys found that immigrants immigrated either alone or with their families, although Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) recorded more cases of family immigration in her study and Repič (2006) found a higher proportion of immigration among younger members of the Slovenian

community who had already acquired Slovenian citizenship. Most of the immigrants had visited Slovenia at least once before immigrating to Slovenia (Repič, 2006). When analysing the migration motives of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants from Argentina to Slovenia after 1990, Repič (2006) and Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) found that the decision to migrate during this period was often related to the political changes in Slovenia. Slovenia's independence was often cited as a decisive attraction factor, especially in the first years after 1990, but after 2000 the push factors from Argentina – the economic crisis in Argentina, the increase in crime and the general deterioration of life security in Argentina – prevailed (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). Among the emigrants who left Slovenia after the Second World War, the study by Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) found that the reasons given for emigration were often independence, Slovene citizenship and the desire to return to the country of origin. The descendants of Slovenian emigrants born in Argentina, on the other hand, cited their Slovene roots and Slovene origin as the main motives for emigrating. In addition to these reasons, they also mentioned employment, education, advancement, studies, the economic crisis in Argentina and personal reasons such as love or divorce. Repič (2006) also reports similar results on the reasons for migration. Immigrants moved to Slovenia either temporarily or permanently. The first waves of immigration were characterised by independent immigration, while in later periods immigrants were often assisted in their immigration to Slovenia by relatives, friends, priests and benefactors, such as non-governmental organisations like the Slovenian Association of Emigrants in the World, Rafael's Society, Karitas and the Slovenian Emigrants' Matica (Lukšič-Hacin, 2006c; Repič, 2006). Lukšič-Hacin's (2006c) research showed that immigrants encountered a number of problems when moving to Slovenia, mainly related to the availability of information on official procedures. They had the greatest difficulties with the organisational and financial aspects of moving, obtaining documents, finding housing, obtaining recognition of educational qualifications obtained abroad, improving their education and language, and integrating their children into the Slovenian school system. According to Repič (2006), after immigrating to Slovenia, Slovenian immigrants from Argentina used networking strategies that were already familiar to them from the Slovenian communities in Argentina. In Slovenia, they formed a network of informal and social connections, mainly through the association »Slovenia in the World«, founded in 1991, and forged community bonds based on shared experiences, their country of origin, national identity and heritage. Language has retained its role as an important marker of integration and national identity, in Argentina it was Slovenian, in Slovenia it has become Spanish. Immigrants also contributed to the establishment and deepening of relations between Argentina and Slovenia, characterised by frequent visits and travel, various forms of cooperation and the maintenance of contact through letters, telephone or other means of communication (Repič, 2006).

5 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The aim of the study conducted in 2022 was to investigate the return migration of Slovenian emigrants from Argentina to Slovenia and the migration of the descendants of the emigrants to the country of origin of their ancestors, Slovenia. Through semi-structured interviews conducted within a biographical-interpretative-narrative methodological approach, we investigated who are the individuals of the Slovenian emigrant community in Argentina who migrate to Slovenia, what are the key factors that trigger this migration process, how do the individuals (re)integrate into their country of origin or the country of origin of their ancestors, how are transnational connections established between Slovenia and Argentina, and how do the individuals perceive their national identity.

The biographical-interpretative narrative method is a qualitative research approach in which semi-structured in-depth interviews are used to collect data. It is a qualitative approach to the study of social phenomena that focuses on the collection and analysis of personal narratives or stories. This methodological approach is important for understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals, which is crucial when studying complex and multi-layered processes, including migration. It allows researchers to include not only general and objective information in the study of the process, but also the personal experiences of individuals that contribute to the emotional, cultural and social aspects of the migration process. The biographical-interpretative narrative approach enables »an empirical treatment of the complexity, diversity and variability of migration by emphasising individual experiences« (Pajnik, Bajt, 2006, p. 74). This approach therefore enables an understanding of individuals' personal and unique migration journeys, including motivations for migration, experiences of integration and coping with identity change. Using biographical narratives, researchers can examine how migrants maintain connections to their home country and how these connections influence their lives in the country of immigration (Eastmond, 2007). Despite the focus on individual experiences, the method can also reveal broader patterns and trends and thus contribute to a better understanding of migration processes. On the other hand, it should be noted that this methodological approach can also have some limitations. One of these is subjectivity, as the data obtained is often subjective and based on the personal views of the interviewee. This means that different interviewees may perceive and interpret the same process or phenomenon differently. Another limitation is the fact that life stories do not always reflect the experiences of the entire population, so that the data obtained cannot be generalised. Furthermore, focusing exclusively on the stories of the interviewees can lead to neglecting broader social, political and other factors that influence the phenomenon or process under study (in our case, return migration). When interpreting the data collected using a biographical-interpretative methodological approach, the researcher must be careful to avoid misinterpretation or bias. Despite its limitations, it is worth

noting that this approach offers valuable insights into personal experiences and perspectives that quantitative research approaches cannot capture.

As part of our research, we conducted a series of semi-structured interviews between May 20 and July 27, 2022. In total, we conducted 12 interviews with 17 respondents. Some of the interviews were conducted as group interviews, as they were families who had moved together and shared the migration experience. Potential interviewees were contacted in advance, the purpose of the research was explained and the areas of investigation were presented. Once consent was obtained, we agreed with the interviewees on the method and timing of the interview, taking into account their preferences and availability. To ensure the comparability of the data, we aimed to conduct the interviews in a uniform manner and emphasised personal and direct communication with the interviewees. Of the total of 12 interviews, 9 were conducted in person and three via online tools. All interviews that were conducted in person were also recorded on tape. After the interviews were conducted, a transcription process followed in which the voice recordings were converted into verbatim text transcripts. These transcripts served as the basis for further data analysis, in which the content of the interviews was analysed and the interviewees' responses were systematically categorised in order to structure the data into meaningful clusters. Once categorised, we began an in-depth analysis and synthesis of the information with the aim of understanding and interpreting the meanings that interviewees attached to their migration experiences.

A questionnaire was developed for the semi-structured interviews and divided into three thematic sections. The first section focused on the interviewees' personal information, their experiences of living in Argentina, their knowledge of the Slovenian language and their connections to Slovenia. The second section aimed to examine the migration process of the interviewees themselves, including their motives, preparations and experiences of migration. The third section focused on the interviewees' experiences of living in Slovenia and the ways in which they maintain their ties with Argentina.

When selecting the interviewees, we took into account various demographic parameters such as gender, age and year of immigration to Slovenia and also tried to capture the geographical diversity of emigration locations in Argentina. Although the focus of the research was on both Slovenian emigrants and descendants of Slovenian emigrants, we interviewed only one Slovenian emigrant, and we also interviewed individuals who stood out from this sample. These included interviewee P, a Slovenian-born descendant of Argentinian immigrants, and interviewee M, who is of Argentinian origin and participated in the interview as a family member to share his experience of immigrating to Slovenia. Nevertheless, both were included in the demographic analysis. Most of the interviewees expressed a wish to remain anonymous, which was achieved by naming the interviewees after consecutive letters of the alphabet, ordered by the date of their immigration to Slovenia.

The demographic profile of the respondents was as follows: The average age of respondents was 36.13 years, with 47% men and 53% women. Of the respondents, 15

were born in Argentina and two in Slovenia. Most of the interviewees, 11, had moved from the province of Buenos Aires, 3 from the province of Tucuman and 2 from the province of Río Negro. With the exception of interviewee M, who was of Argentinian origin, all other interviewees were of Slovenian origin. All interviewees came from the Slovenian emigrant community that emerged after the Second World War. At the time of the interviews, the majority of the interviewees, i.e. 10, had the status of a worker, 3 were students, 2 were unemployed – which may be related to the fact that they had only been in Slovenia for a short time and were still looking for a job, and one interviewee had the status of a pensioner.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following, the results of the qualitative research are presented in more detail in three sections (Life in Argentina, Migration to Slovenia, Life in Slovenia), as this is the most comprehensive way of outlining and detailing the characteristics of the Slovenian community that migrated from Argentina.

6.1 Life in Argentina

In this study, we first examined the linguistic profile of members of the Slovenian diaspora who immigrated from Argentina. Within the Slovenian community in Argentina, the Slovenian language was the central distinguishing feature of Slovenian emigration. As we wrote in the introduction, knowledge and preservation of the Slovenian language played an essential role in maintaining and strengthening their national and cultural identity. The Slovenian community in Argentina carefully preserved the Slovenian language through various forms of education, such as primary school classes, language courses and cultural activities aimed at preserving the Slovenian language and culture. All this not only reflected the desire to preserve the linguistic heritage, but also played an important role in strengthening community ties and maintaining awareness of a common Slovenian identity.

We identified five main groups of respondents according to their attitudes and knowledge of the Slovenian language before moving to Slovenia. The first group included nine interviewees whose mother tongue was Slovenian and whose first language was Spanish, which they had learned upon entering the Argentinian school system. In the second group there were three interviewees from mixed marriages who were taught in both languages, Slovenian and Spanish. The third group included one interviewee (N) who learned Spanish after immigrating to Argentina, the fourth group included one interviewee (A) who emigrated from Argentina at a young age and never learned Spanish, and the fifth group included one interviewee (P) who is a descendant of Slovenian immigrants from Argentina and grew

up bilingual. For most of the interviewees, Slovenian language was either their first language or one of their first languages. The exceptions were interviewees A, N and P. Most of them participated in organised Slovenian education in Argentina, which included kindergartens, schools and high school courses. In Argentina, the interviewees spoke Slovenian in the family circle and within the Slovenian community, while communication with peers and Argentinian families was mostly in Spanish, as interviewees B and G mentioned:

»I learned most of my Slovenian from my grandparents, because my parents worked and my grandparents took care of me from an early age. And then I also spoke Slovenian with all my aunts and uncles, because the culture of speaking Slovenian at home was in the family /.../« (interviewee B, 2022).

»It's very sad, but we speak Spanish with our fellow citizens. But I've noticed that the community in Bariloche – they all speak Slovenian with each other. And on every occasion /.../ I've seen my cousin, and she speaks Slovenian with her children. And when they're around, we speak Slovenian, which is sometimes a bit strange. We think: why are you suddenly switching, we've always spoken Spanish? But then you get used to it and that's the right way. Because otherwise, unfortunately, the language slowly gets lost« (interviewee G, 2022).

For most interviewees, entering the Argentinian school system was a turning point in their language skills. Some interviewees (e.g. F and G) pointed out that they continued to speak Spanish in the Slovenian environment after entering and graduating from the Argentinian school system, reflecting the complexity of their identity:

»/.../ The (home) environment was more Slovenian than Argentinian. As soon as you go to school, the Argentinian culture starts to dominate« (interviewee F, 2022).

»When I speak, Spanish is easier. But why? Because my whole time at school was in Spanish. And I think that shapes you a lot. When I read, it's easier for me because I learned in that language and grew up in that environment« (interviewee G, 2022).

In the following research, we have also tried to shed light on the diversity of national identity in the Slovenian community in Argentina. The interviews reveal four main ways of defining the national identity of the Slovenian community in Argentina: dual identity, Slovenian identity, composite identity and the identity of the descendants of Slovenian immigrants. Most respondents expressed a sense of dual identity. Most of them, including interviewees H, B and J, emphasised difficulties and uncertainty in defining their national identity:

»In my opinion, this is the most difficult question because I don't know the answer. They ask you whether you feel Slovenian or Argentinian, and you don't know whether you feel both or neither /.../ It's a bit special. I'm both« (interviewee H, 2022).

»The problem is – because I don't know. And I definitely asked myself that as a teenager. Now I don't, I don't care anymore. I basically stopped bothering with the question, but I was in a dilemma. I mostly came to the conclusion that I'm Slovenian in Argentina and Argentinian in Slovenia« (interviewee B, 2022).

»We felt Slovenian there because we weren't quite Argentinian. /.../ We had a lot of Slovenian habits. We were Slovenians in Argentina. Then you come here and you feel so - you're neither one nor the other. You're not quite one thing, you're both all the time« (interviewee J, 2022).

A few interviewees identified themselves primarily as Slovenes and emphasised their Slovenian identity. These were both people who were born in Slovenia and later moved to Argentina, as well as those who were born in Argentina but were active in the Slovenian community there:

»I almost have to say that I am Slovenian. I still have a very large part of Argentina in me, but we moved so many years ago that I am no longer at home in Argentina /.../« (interviewee E, 2022).

The third group expressed in the interviews their multilayered, i.e. composite or and-and-identity (Milharčič Hladnik, 2011; Vižintin, 2015), which combines Slovenian, Argentinian and other cultural elements. They identified with several cultures at the same time, which reflects their diverse heritage:

»My genes are a cocktail, Slovenian on my father's side, Argentinian and Peruvian on my mother's side. Except that my grandfather, my mother's father, was half Indian. I am proud of this unusual and interesting combination, which gives me the feeling of being completely Argentinian, Slovenian, Peruvian and Indian« (interviewee D, 2022).

Others are descendants of Slovenian immigrants who feel a special connection to Argentina, even though they were born and raised in Slovenia, and therefore we have labelled their identity as that of descendants of Slovenian immigrants. In the description, this is emphasised by the interviewee P:

»When I was growing up, my parents had a very distinct accent, and it was always a bit annoying. Every time they read a book, everyone knew, even if they didn't know them, that they weren't from here. So I always felt a bit like a foreigner, even though

I was born here. Their whole identity was a bit foreign, although the goal was always to come here and be Slovenian /.../« (interviewee P, 2022).

Respondents related their national identity to their place of birth, length of residence in a particular country, language, cultural characteristics and contact with relatives and friends in Argentina. The results of the survey show the complexity of the definition of national identity among immigrants from the Slovenian community in Argentina and illustrate the influence of intercultural interactions on the formation of national identity.

As part of our research on the migration experiences of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants from Argentina to Slovenia, we analysed the role of previous contacts and visits to Slovenia in their decision to migrate. Most of the interviewees had regular contact with relatives, friends and acquaintances in Slovenia prior to their migration. These contacts were established through various communication channels: in the past through letters and phone calls and more recently through online platforms and applications as well as social networks. Our survey results show that nine of the respondents had visited Slovenia on various occasions before moving to Slovenia – family vacations, visits to relatives and friends, family celebrations, graduation trips and educational courses (e.g. courses for Slovenian language teachers). These experiences left a strong impression on many interviewees and even awakened a deep emotional desire in some to move to Slovenia. This is how interviewee H describes his experiences during a visit to Slovenia:

»I visited Slovenia for the first time in 1997, when I was 13 years old. We were here with my family, visiting family for a whole month. And it was so beautiful that I cried a lot when we had to leave. Back then I only thought or knew or wished that I would come here« (interviewee H, 2022).

The description underlines the importance of personal experience and emotional attachment to the country of origin for the decision to migrate. It also underlines the fact that migration decisions are not only shaped by economic or political reasons, but also by personal and emotional ties.

6.2 Immigrating to Slovenia

In the second part of the study, we concentrated on the migration process itself. First of all, we were interested in the temporal dimension of return migration or immigration to Slovenia. The people we interviewed reflect different waves of return migration or immigration associated with the typical migration periods we described in the introductory sections of this paper. Four periods of immigration to Slovenia can be derived from the results of the interviews:

- after 1991: one interviewee and her family immigrated to Slovenia after Slovenia gained independence,
- after 2002: three of the interviewees immigrated to Slovenia after the economic crisis in Argentina in 2002,
- 2012—2019: immigration of individual respondents to Slovenia for various reasons,
- 2022: the largest number of interviewees (5) immigrated to Slovenia this year, which indicates a possible new wave of immigration after the Covid-19 epidemic, which, as we wrote in the introduction, is not yet documented in any scientific or academic literature, but was described in our interview by interviewee H:

»/.../ More and more Argentinian Slovenians are returning. Last year it was crazy. Three, four, five whole families every month. You hear about someone all the time« (interviewee H).

As part of the survey, we were also interested in the reasons why Slovenian emigrants and their descendants moved from Argentina. The majority of respondents cited the economic situation in Argentina as the main reason for moving, followed by the deterioration in general security and the increase in crime. In the interview, interviewee B described several crime-related incidents that influenced the decision to move:

»/.../ Crime was definitely one of the reasons. My mother, for example, was robbed. I know that once she was walking down the street and a motorcyclist came with a knife and took her handbag. But that's a classic in Argentina. /.../ Then our car was stolen from in front of the house« (interviewee B, 2022).

Those who moved as singles emphasised in the interviews that the decision to move was influenced by the search for better personal or professional opportunities, while parents who moved with their families often expressed the desire to secure a better future for their children. Interviewee J emphasised the importance of family and sacrifice for better opportunities for the children:

»We said, let us all go together for their sake. Let us go as a family. /.../ Family is important to us. So that they can grow up in the family, we have to sacrifice that today. We have to leave something behind and start over so that they can have something better in their lives. That was the most important thing, that they will have more opportunities in the world« (interviewee J, 2022).

The decision to migrate often depended on the jobs or scholarships already arranged in Slovenia. Interviewee E emphasised that a migration would not have been possible without a guaranteed job:

»We made the decision after he had already confirmed that he had got the job, when only the final negotiations was still pending. If he had not got the job, we probably would not have moved« (interviewee E, 2022).

Some of the interviewees (5) mentioned Slovenian identity, patriotism and Slovenian roots as an important factor in their decision to migrate, but never as the only or primary reason, which is also underlined by interviewee A's description:

»(My parents) were Slovenians through - they grew up in the Argentinian world and all that, but I think they had this awareness of where they came from because of their parents. They had in the back of their minds that they would come back. Well, and then they did come back." /.../ The economic instability in Argentina probably also contributed to this. /.../ The main reason was certainly that my dad got a job« (interviewee A, 2022).

The results showed that the decision to migrate from Argentina to Slovenia was often multi-faceted, with a combination of economic, security and family factors influencing the final decision to migrate.

Next, we were interested in how Slovenian emigrants from Argentina and their descendants chose to reside in certain town in Slovenia, as we wanted to understand how various factors influenced this decision. The majority of interviewees stated that the main factor influencing their choice of residence in Slovenia was good transport links to Ljubljana, while interviewees A and D emphasised their desire for a natural environment and good transport links:

»/.../ daddy was looking for something like Bariloche, with lots of nature, some water to swim in. I think it was important for him that we were in nature, but not cut off from the capital« (interviewee A, 2022).

»We had no particular place in mind. Of course we were looking for a quiet and beautiful place, but above all we were looking for good connections, relative closeness to Ljubljana, closeness to the necessary infrastructure for daily life« (interviewee D, 2022).

The survey also showed differences in places of immigration between individual and family immigration. Individuals who immigrated independently often chose closeness to urban centres, especially Ljubljana, because of its liveliness and vibrancy. Those who immigrated with the whole family, on the other hand, chose a quieter, more natural environment outside the major urban centres. For 10 respondents, the original place of immigration was in the Osrednjeslovenska statistical region, three migrated to the Jugovzhodna Slovenia statistical region and one to Goriška. However, it should be noted that further internal migration was common, with individuals who migrated to Slovenia on

their own initiative mostly moving closer to Ljubljana, while families moved to more rural and suburban areas. The study found that the original place of residence of ancestors had no significant influence on the immigrants' choice of place of residence, only three interviewees stated that they had moved close to the places where their ancestors had lived, but this was more by chance than a conscious decision.

In the survey, we were also interested in how Slovenian emigrants from Argentina and their descendants used various sources of help and support when immigrating to Slovenia. We analysed how social networks, family members, relatives and institutional structures influenced the migration process. The majority of respondents stated that contacts with relatives, friends and acquaintances in Slovenia were crucial for their migration. These contacts provided not only moral and emotional support, but also practical help, e.g. in the form of advice, assistance in finding accommodation and integration into the new social environment. Interviewee (J), who immigrated to Slovenia in 2022, emphasised the important role of the Facebook group "Argentinos en Eslovenia" and the Slovenian embassy in Buenos Aires in obtaining Slovenian citizenship for her children, while interviewee C, who immigrated in 2003, highlighted the support of Karitas. This aspect underlines the importance of community and solidarity among people who are willing to help newcomers. In addition to moral support, some interviewees also highlighted the financial and logistical support they received from relatives and friends, which was crucial in easing the transition and adapting to the new social environment. The results show how different forms of support contribute to the successful immigration and integration of Slovenian emigrants from Argentina into Slovenian society. They emphasise the importance of social networks and solidarity as key factors in the migration process.

The interviews revealed that most of the interviewees had already obtained their Slovenian citizenship before moving to Slovenia. However, some of them had to obtain the documents for their family members. The interviewees emphasised their satisfaction with the functioning of the Slovenian system and the helpfulness of the people, although some had difficulties getting their diplomas nostrified for certain professions, as interviewee F also pointed out:

»What I have, a high school education, I'd have to do here again. The public sector won't hire you if you don't have at least a degree. It's a bit weird because it's not necessarily the case that if you have a degree you're good enough. I understand that for a doctor, but it's not the same« (interviewee F, 2022).

The search for an apartment was mostly carried out with the help of relatives, acquaintances and friends who had already lived in Slovenia. They helped them find accommodation, passed on information and in some cases offered them a place to stay. Most immigrants had already looked for accommodation before moving to Slovenia, which helped them to avoid major problems in their search.

In terms of employment, some of the interviewees had already found a job before arriving in Slovenia, while others had not found a job in their profession or had encountered the aforementioned problems related to the recognition of educational qualifications and the nostrification of diplomas. For the family members of Argentinian origin, the job search took a little longer, which was related to language barriers and obtaining the necessary documents.

With regard to schooling, some of the interviewees and their family members continued their education after the immigration, although they were confronted with language barriers, as interviewee I also notes below. Thus, additional Slovenian language courses after immigration were in some cases necessary for successful integration into the Slovenian school system:

»After I arrived, I learned Slovenian at school, and then I had Zoom every Friday, like office hours, so I practised Slovenian because we were in quarantine and I didn't have that contact» (interviewee I, 2022).

6.3 Life in Slovenia

The results of the survey showed that age plays a very important role in the integration of immigrants into Slovenian society. From the interviews, we learned that those who immigrated during their school years and integrated into a new environment in Slovenia often faced major integration problems, including feelings of isolation and bullying at school. Although most eventually felt accepted, some expressed that the adjustment process was lengthy, especially for those who were integrated into existing groups (classes) at school, major challenges were observed especially in the last three years of primary school, as also highlighted by interviewees E and C:

»When I came to ninth grade, I got into a group that was already formed and just waiting to go (to high school). That's not exactly a welcoming environment. In fact, I spent a whole year just waiting for elementary school to be over« (interviewee E, 2022).

»I would be lying if I said it was easy to integrate into a social environment, especially at that age, at least I can say that for myself, well. I know that we had some problems at the first school we moved to, that we also experienced bullying, nothing drastic, but yes. For me personally, it was also difficult because it was a big change to move into an environment where people are generally not so open and there are circles with some closed groups« (interviewee C, 2022).

However, the majority of interviewees who immigrated to Slovenia later reported predominantly positive integration experiences, which they attributed to the existing contact networks in the country. These networks enabled them to integrate more quickly into their new social environment, as interviewee F also reported:

»I felt very well accepted, without any problems. I first made contacts with acquaintances and relatives, but I also remember that I immediately made contacts at work« (interviewee F, 2022).

Nevertheless, the interviewees pointed out certain challenges, such as intercultural differences and adapting to the Slovenian language. Some (e.g. interviewee O) mentioned a large gap between their knowledge of Slovenian, which they learned and spoke in Argentina, and the modern Slovenian spoken in Slovenia today.

»And I do not understand everything they say here. /.../ In Argentina, the language has stood still in time. Even we know when a Slovenian comes to Argentina that he is Slovenian ... because he speaks Slovenian! Not what we mix up. Slovenian language has developed over the last thirty years« (interviewee O, 2022).

In the survey, we found that the majority of respondents use Slovenian language mainly in formal situations, e.g. in public appearances or when communicating with older family members, while the use of Spanish language predominates among their peers. In conversations with other Argentinian immigrants, Spanish predominates or a combination of the two languages, which is often mixed, which interviewee P refers to as “Slovenian-Spanish” - a mixture of Spanish and Slovenian. Based on the results of the interviews, we hypothesise that the language of communication in the home environment in Slovenia depends on language habits in Argentina, personal choices and the length of stay in Slovenia. Most immigrants consciously choose to keep Spanish at home, which was confirmed by interviewee B, who said that they mainly speak Spanish at home to maintain the connection with their Argentine family:

»At home, here in Slovenia, we mostly speak Spanish. And why is that? Mainly because when my brother was born in 2003 and another brother in 2006, I tended to speak Spanish at home. If not, it is often the case that in such a mixed environment there is a mixture, namely the Spanish-Slovenian that my brothers speak. And so we actually spoke more Spanish at home. So that they can speak it well and get along with their mother's side of the family in Argentina, especially for that reason. Today we only speak Spanish with each other, and of course a little Slovenian too« (interviewee B, 2022).

On the other hand, interviewees A and E stated that they had given up communicating in Spanish and mainly spoke Slovenian at home:

»We tried to spend one day a week in Spanish. But, as I said, it's so unnatural for me to speak to my parents in Spanish« (interviewee E, 2022).

»My mother told me that when we came here, she didn't think about speaking to us in Spanish because our mother tongue is Slovenian. It was only when we were a bit older that she tried to teach us something and took Spanish lessons with us, but not much« (interviewee A, 2022).

The immigrants in Slovenia also maintain some Argentinian customs and traditions. The most frequently mentioned are the preparation of Argentinian dishes, drinking mate tea and Argentinian wines. Watching football is also popular among them, ten respondents described it as a typical Argentine habit that they still practise:

»I watch football and I like it because it's crazy in Argentina. It's like a religion. Especially at the Mondial. For the World Cup, I take a holiday when I can. I'm joking a bit, but it's true. I won't go to work on the day Argentina plays« (interviewee H, 2022).

The process of preserving Argentine culture among immigrants from Argentina in Slovenia mirrors the reverse process of preserving Slovenian culture that these individuals and families practised in Argentina before moving to Slovenia. Interestingly, they actively preserved the Slovenian language and customs in Argentina, while some of them preserved the Spanish language and Argentinian culture in Slovenia. This pattern of heritage preservation, together with mutual connections, contributes to the formation of a unique Argentine-Slovenian immigrant community. This community exhibits similar characteristics and cultural preservation strategies as the Slovenian immigrant community in Argentina, demonstrating the importance of preserving cultural identity in a changing environment.

In the study, we were also interested in the interactions of the interviewees with other Slovenian immigrants from Argentina, we were interested in how often they meet and under what circumstances. We found that respondents have regular encounters in both formal and informal contexts. Formal encounters include attending Argentinian fairs and events organised by the Slovenian Association of Emigrants in the World. This association organises various events such as the pilgrimage to Brezje, the celebration of the Argentine National Day on 25 May, theatre performances and concerts. We have noticed that newcomers are more involved in the association's activities, while those who immigrated to Slovenia earlier often find other ways to build social networks outside of these formal gatherings. Despite these formal gatherings, informal gatherings with family and friendship events predominate.

The survey also investigated how respondents maintain their transnational links with Argentina. We found that all respondents maintain regular contact with relatives and friends in Argentina, with social media being the predominant method of communication, and one respondent pointed out that he communicates with his grandparents in Argentina via phone calls. Visits between the two countries are also frequent,

with two respondents stating that they visit Argentina several times, especially now that they are financially able to do so.

In the survey, we were also interested in the long-term residence of immigrants from Argentina. Five of the interviewees had planned to stay in Slovenia permanently from the outset, while nine interviewees had initially only planned to stay temporarily or on a trial basis. At the time of our interview, however, most of them expressed the intention to stay in Slovenia permanently. Interviewee H, for example, said that he had initially decided to stay for a trial period, but then decided to stay in Slovenia permanently:

».../ I had no intention that it should be permanent. I said, "Let's give it a try." /.../ it was still kind of an open option, but slowly I realised that it's good here too. Now this year, at the end of last year, I've come to terms with it, I've said, "This is it It's fine, I mean, I've no reason to go anywhere else. If something goes wrong, maybe I'll think about it, but the intention is to stay permanently« (interviewee H, 2022).

Two of the interviewees emphasised that a return to Argentina is not ruled out in the future:

»I need to feel that I belong - where I live. That's why for me it's either Argentina or Slovenia. But it's still hard to say that we'll live here all our lives. I honestly don't know what will happen. /.../ If something happens to our parents and they need us to be there for them and take care of them. /.../ And if anything happens, we're ready to leave everything and go« (interviewee G, 2022).

The rest of the respondents do not plan to return to Argentina, except for visits or trips. However, three of the interviewees who were still students at the time of the survey expressed a desire to move to other countries such as Spain, Germany or Austria for economic and professional reasons.

7 CONCLUSION

Our research on Slovenian emigrants and the descendants of Slovenian emigrants from Argentina who immigrated to Slovenia has revealed several important findings, which on the one hand confirm and on the other hand complement and build on the research carried out in 2006. The interviews with respondents confirm several waves of immigration to Slovenia, which were more intense especially after Slovenia's independence in 1991 and after the economic crisis in Argentina around the year 2000, as also reported by Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) and Repič (2006). However, our research has revealed a new wave of immigration of Slovene emigrants and their descendants from

Argentina in the period after the Covid-19 epidemic, suggesting that the process of return migration of this community is still ongoing and by no means negligible and should receive more attention in future research.

We found that the immigrants to Slovenia were mainly those emigrants and descendants who were actively involved in the Slovenian emigrant community in Argentina, as Lukšič-Hacin (2006c) and Repič (2006) also emphasised in their research. While the preservation of linguistic and cultural practises was important for integration into Slovenian society, it was not the predominant trigger for return migration. The main trigger for return migration, according to our findings, was the economic situation in Argentina, together with security issues and the desire to provide better future opportunities for their children.

In connection with the definition of national identity, respondents emphasised their Slovene identity, dual identity, composite identity and the identity of the descendants of Slovene immigrants. Most descendants of Slovenian immigrants from Argentina experience a split in the definition of their national identity, although this is not true for all of them. Some identify with a dual or composite identity that reflects their mixed ancestry. It should be noted that the definition of national identity of the Slovenian diaspora is much more complex and complicated than that of an ordinary citizen, a member of the majority nation in their own country.

The survey also confirmed that immigrants from Argentina are actively building transnational links between Slovenia and Argentina. They keep in touch with friends, relatives and acquaintances and make visits and trips between the two countries. Some do not rule out the possibility of returning to Argentina, reflecting the dynamic nature of transnational migration processes.

Our findings show the complexity and multi-layered nature of the migration experiences of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants from Argentina. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that our research was qualitative and based on a biographical-interpretative narrative method, which brings a different insight into otherwise “traditional” migration research. In qualitative research, we primarily aim to discover particularities, differences and atypicalities that are more difficult to explore in so-called traditional quantitative research. The life stories we used in our research use a small, atypical sample whose answers cannot be generalised and related to the entire population of Slovenian emigrants and their descendants who immigrated from Argentina. However, the results of our survey can certainly serve as a basis for further research on the return migration of the Slovenian diaspora and their integration into the immigrant milieu.

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