

# Identity benchmarks and reintegration issues of return migration

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**ABSTRACT:** Return migration can be understood provided that the causes of emigration, either economic, political, family reunification or other, are known. Return migration can be triggered by political regime changes in the destination country, reduction in job opportunities and possibly economic changes that lead to low incomes for the work performed. Return migration can also be caused by the fulfillment of the objectives in the destination country or by a change in the economic situation in the country of origin.

The emigrant is subjected to transformation processes in the country of migration. As a result, he undergoes a series of socio-economic and identity changes that are noticed in his attitude, behavior and mentality after the return to the home country. The reintegration process in the home country can be quick or slow, depending on the changes experienced by the emigrant. The experience in the country of migration either can create difficulties in readaptation of the emigrant, or can contribute to personal, family and professional development. By employing case study as a research method, the present paper highlights the difficulties met by emigrants after returning to the home country and the ways of addressing them throughout the reintegration process, using in certain situations aspects learned and assimilated in the country of migration.

**KEY WORDS:** international migration, return migration, reintegration, readaptation, identity benchmarks, change, development.

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## **1. Introduction**

Over the recent years, return migration has become important to study, because of the implications emerging with the decision of some emigrants to return to the home community after a longer period of emigration. Although it seems utopian, emigrants face reintegration difficulties in their home country in terms of lifestyle, work style, mentality, difference in quality of life, cultural differences, acceptance and integration in a work place, etc. This paper analyzes the phenomenon of return migration with its implications and changes observed at the identity level that may have a negative impact, but which may also bring benefits at the return in the home country.

In this paper a real success story is presented, based on which we analyze the ways of readaptation and reintegration in the home community, the benefits of international migration on return, identity benchmarks during the emigration period that served as basis for success in the present case and finally the relationships created abroad which enabled opening and operating a livestock farm business with the creation of new jobs in the home country.

## **2. Return migration**

Return migration can be understood only when the causes of emigration, whether economic, political, family reunification or other, are known. By understanding the causes of migration, the reasons for returning to the country of origin can also be understood. The emigrant can return either voluntarily, by his own decision, or forced by certain circumstances. In this respect, the concept of international return migration is defined according to the conditions imposing the return: "voluntary return, namely the assisted or independent departure to return to the country of origin; return based on a decision of the migrant (return at choice), which is the act of return based on the migrant's free will, which is different from voluntary return; forced return, which is the obligatory return of the migrant to the country of origin as a result of administrative or legal action taken by the public authorities of the destination country at the request of removing the person from its territory; expulsion, namely the administrative or legal procedure to expel a person by force outside the national borders (Badea, Camelia Virginia, 2009, p. 57). Olesen draws attention on other characteristics regarding the phenomenon of return migration: " return caused by migration failure, including forced migration, expulsion or readmission; return caused by cultural conflicts and unacceptable psychological distance from family and friends; return caused by retirement, exit from the active labor market; return to the

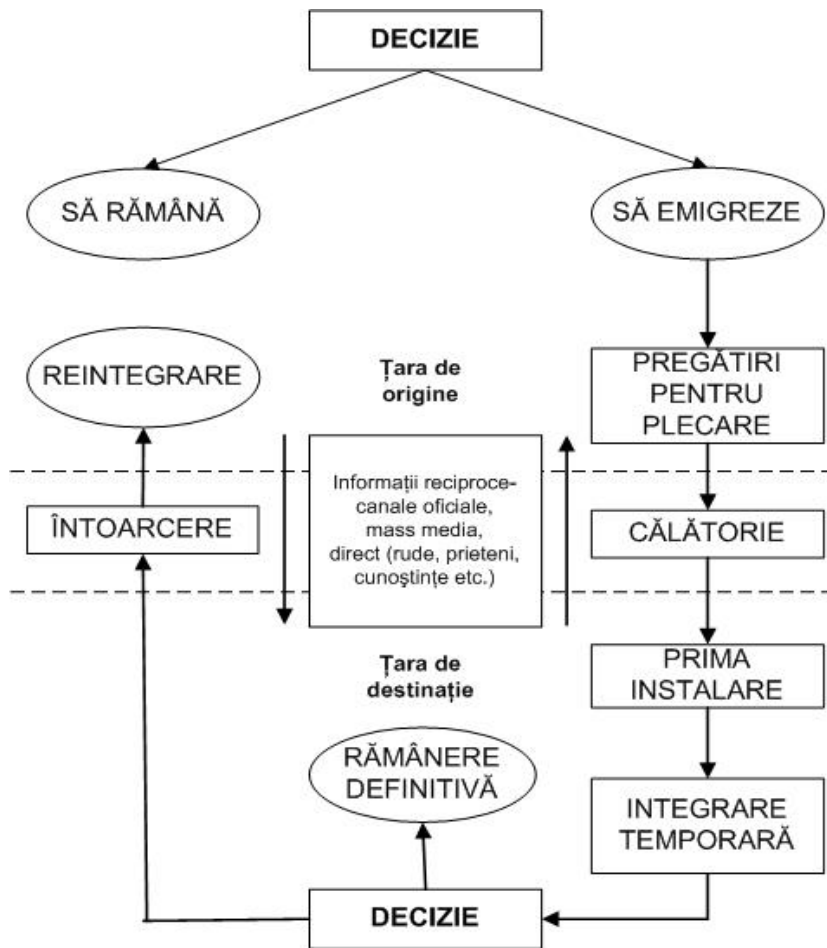
place of origin with the intention of innovation. "(Calin, Romelia; Umbres, Gabriel Radu, 2006, p. 162)

Return can also be triggered by a political regime change in the country of destination, a reduction of job opportunities and potentially economic changes that result in low earnings for the performed work. Return may be caused by meeting one's aims in the destination country or a change in the economic situation in the country of origin. We can distinguish a typology of return migration: the return "caused by the failure of migration or by forced return, resulting from the failure to adapt to the destination environment, generated by the exit from the labor market and the return with intent to innovate in the country of origin." (Badea, Camelia Virginia, 2009, p. 60).

Once returning to the country of origin, the emigrant may engage professionally or may refuse any integration in the labor market. Thus, there are migrants who, having accumulated important resources in the country of immigration, on returning to the country of origin rely on these resources without a professional implication of one nature or another. This type of emigrant opts for "consume in the country and / or the locality of origin, given that the migrant has accumulated resources to spend on the desired type of consume in the environment to which he is affectively related. The implicit reasoning is as follows: I have earned enough to live in the environment I like, even though the cost of living in this environment is similar to that where I live as an immigrant." (Sandu, Dumitru (coord.), 2010, p. 114).

Another type of emigrant is the one who, after returning to the country of origin, accepts a lower-income job, relying to some extent on the income earned in the country of immigration. This emigrant faces the situation where "the cost of the desired consume is lower at the place of origin than at the destination. In such cases, even if the potential income earned at home is lower than the income at destination, the return can be based on the following reasoning: although I will earn less, with the money I already have, I will be able to have a better life there, because the cost of living is lower and because I like it more, I am more used to people and places." (Ibidem) The third type of emigrant is the one who returns to the country of origin forced by the resources available in the destination country, because of losing his job or similar problems.

Although it seems insignificant, the person returning to the destination country, besides having experienced more tension where extreme decisions were needed, encounters a changed environment where he no longer has a social and economic basis, and where the state of external pressure can cause psychological, social and relational imbalance.



*The stages of migration flow (Rusu, Valeriu, 2003, p. 32)*

### 3. Emigration, identity change vs. reintegration in the country of origin

A person builds and rebuilds his / her own identity, depending on the environment and the community he relates himself to. He can be considered an active member in the construction of social identity. "Identity results from the interaction of the individual with society, within a symbolic universe internalized with varied legitimations from one individual to another. Identity is an active interaction and one cannot distinguish a timeless movement "pending identity" from a temporal movement "continuity", the dynamics of identity integrates this complexity. "(Zavalloni, Louis Guerin, 1984, apud. Costalat-Founeau, Anne-Marie, 1997, p. 18)

Building an identity is not easy for emigrants. They adopt different types of behavior as a reaction to challenging their own values and culture of origin. Personal identity of an emigrant is

built in relation with other individuals, which represent his own universe: nothing is more collective than personal identity. This type of identity is strongly influenced by interaction. As a result of this interaction, there is an exchange of information, opinions, beliefs among individuals, all of which have an impact on the identity of the emigrant. Identity change occurs with the decision to leave abroad and is noted throughout the migration flow. Thus, through migration, the person experiences loss and separation: "the loss of the place where he was born, of his friends, relatives, the whole world - animated and inanimate - with which he was accustomed; the loss – in most cases - of the mother tongue - whose internalization has essentially contributed to the construction of the explicit memory and the more mature part of the Self; the loss of socio-cultural space, essential for identity formation. The emigrant initially loses the feeling of natural belonging to the wider or more constrained circle of his own kind. "(Brundl, Peter; Kogan, Ilany, 2006, p. 193).

All these losses are to some extent compensated by the opportunities and facilities in the country of immigration. However, to enjoy them, the emigrant has to undergo several stages, of adaptation, assimilation and integration. Interaction, specificity, diversity and dynamics determined by the migration phenomenon imply integrating multiple identities subject to various processes and influences that change in relation to changes in the host society. The integration process is a prerequisite for the multiplication and change of individual and collective identities.

Any individual who has undergone the migration experience can be affected by identity changes. These changes are noticed with the integration into the country of immigration through adaptation to the new social environment, acceptance of reference models from other backgrounds / social groups, integration and assimilation into another professional group or another work community, learning another language, new social relationships, accepting and acquiring other norms, rules and principles of life. Such changes are noted at different levels: changes in the personal, social, family identity; changes in the professional field and perspective; changes in image and self-esteem; changes in mentality, perception; changes in social and professional mobility; changes in lifestyle; changes in social relationships in the country of origin and abroad; attitude, behavior changes etc.

The emigrant reaches a climax when he does not know who he is, where he is from, where he is heading to, where he goes, where and whether he returns. Being abroad makes him feel different and unstable in his own being. "The foreign country is the environment I feel close to and far from at the same time. It is not related to the stranger who comes today and remains

tomorrow, nor to the wanderer who comes today and leaves tomorrow. It is not the alterity, the difference that comes to my home. It's the alterity I find across the border, with a lot of foreigners in their world or country, which I bring home with me. More or less deciphered, present in my own experience through acceptance, rejection or adaptation. " (Sandu, Dumitru (coord.), Iași, 2006, p. 22)

The impact of being abroad is felt even stronger in return migration. Thus, the changes that occurred during the emigration period are enhanced and felt both by the individual and by those with whom he interacts (family, community). "The foreign country of the return migrant, who was beyond the national borders, is a different, distant world that must be understood and which, in most cases, leaves marks in his own mentality. For the native, the immigrant is the stranger perceived as mobile, different, but also similar, close and far away at the same time. The return migrant perceives the foreign native as stable, distant and different, but sometimes similar, interesting, useful through his resources and way of thinking. The foreign country is a world different from mine, which becomes known to those originating from there who meet me or to whom I go permanently or temporarily. The world in which I was a temporary immigrant can influence me by broadening my horizons, the new reference points according to which I begin to assess my own world. I love it or hate it, accept it or refuse it as a way of life depending on how I have been received there, on the intentions I have, the successes or the frustrations I have returned with. "(Ibidem, p. 23)

On returning, the emigrant can undergo different states and stages: he does not find his place anymore, he feels some changes in the family and community, he does not identify his role and his relationship with the social environment in the country of origin, etc. All this draws attention to the concept of reintegration related to return migration. Given these situations, there are countries with such reintegration programs, whereas others do not have such programs or such programs are undeveloped. "Not all countries of origin have the capacity to reintegrate those who return. In some cases, returns are provided with reintegration programs, and some governments help emigrants to invest what they earned abroad. Some countries are unable to help reintegration of migrants. This phenomenon is particularly true in situations caused by conflicts that require a massive reconstruction of the economy, of the legal system and the political structures. "(Octavian, Floricel, 2003, p. 62)

Thus, the return migration has certain effects on the country and the locality of origin, on the emigrant and his / her family respectively. These effects are felt at the economic and social

levels. For returning migrants, this is a new "beginning". Readaptation and reintegration into the old way of life, the search for a source of income through social mobility related to the migration experience, the dependence of the return to the social, historical and family context, family reunification, a.s.o. are some of the aspects of the return migration phenomenon.

#### **4. Case Study. Reintegration and success**

Case description:

A 43-year-old man from Baia Mare, Romania, emigrant to France, Belgium and Germany, worked for 11 years in various fields of activity, including construction, agriculture, and at a livestock farm. He returned to the home country in 2010 together with his family and decided to open a business, a livestock farm, initially with own resources, and later on using European funds. The idea of starting this business came from the desire to return to the home country with the family, but also from the desire to bring with him what he learned to do, what he saw and what he believed that could help the development of the community of origin.

*"I wanted to go back to the home country, I was tired of so much work in the countries I was in. Not that I was avoiding work, but I wanted to achieve stability and accomplish something in my own country and for my family. With the saved money, I started this business. It was not easy, but I eventually succeeded." (M.I., 43 years old)*

He relied heavily on the experience accumulated while working in Germany at a livestock farm. He believes that his success in the home country has resulted from the gained experience, the lessons learned, but also from the fairness of work which he learned in Germany.

*"I told myself that I could not fail if I did what the Germans at that livestock farm did. I have used my experience gained there, I've learned many things and implemented them here. Yes, I was finally successful here, but with the mentality and style of work learned there." (M.I., 43 years old)*

The idea of setting up a business consisting of a livestock farm in the home country was implemented following a national market analysis, but also after signing meat delivery contracts with contacts abroad. The business was supported by the owners of the German livestock farm who liked the idea of setting up a farm in Romania with the same standards. Subsequently, Mr. M.I. managed to obtain European funds used for expanding and modernization of his farm.

*"I was initially helped by my bosses in Germany. Besides, it would have been very difficult for me to start this business on my own. They helped me with resources, ideas, but also*

*with contracts in Germany and other countries. Later on, I managed to access European funds with which I expanded and modernized my farm. "(M.I., 43 years old)*

Difficulties encountered in the country of immigration:

Mr. M.I. mentioned that he did not have an easy life as an emigrant. He always experienced the stages of integration and adaptation in countries where he emigrated, and although he was used to being an emigrant, he always faced difficulties. He performed hard work, was humiliated, offended because of his nationality, but also had pleasant surprises and useful experiences. He mentioned that working abroad changes people, as there might occur situations where migrants do not know exactly where they want to be anymore and how they want to live their life. He experienced such a situation and decided to return to the home country.

*"Being an emigrant is not easy, but there are good and worse sides of the story. I was humiliated, sometimes I had no money to pay the rent and stayed where I could; I sometimes felt exploited through work, but I also had chances that I did not have in the home country. And the biggest chance was to work at the livestock farm in Germany and meet my bosses who appreciated me and besides learning a lot there, I was helped and supported to open a business of my own in the home country. "(M.I., 43 years old)*

Difficulties on returning to the home country:

Mr. M. I. mentioned that he did not think he could face difficulties on returning to the home country. But, besides not finding his place, he could not easily get used to the lifestyle in the home country, and he encountered a lot of bureaucratic problems when he set the business. Furthermore, his family - wife and children, have encountered difficulties on returning.

*"When I decided to go back to my home country, I did not think for a moment that I might face difficulties on returning. But it was not easy for me because I did not know the laws, I had not started a business before and I faced bureaucratic problems when I started setting up this business. Unfortunately, the Romanian system does not encourage such actions. "(M.I., 43 years old)*

Difficulties in starting the business: bureaucracy, mentality in the home country, finding hard-working people, inefficient work, unjust controls, "impossible" requirements, failure of some collaborations and implicitly refusal of some contracts, the emergence of unforeseen problems (e.g. sickness, death of animals, the leave of an employee, high costs / low profits, etc.).



Elements learned in the country of immigration and used as resources on return to the home country:

Mr. M.I. mentioned a number of elements in the country of immigration that helped him after his return to the home country, when he started his business: attitude towards work, seriousness, management of material and human resources, fairness towards business partners - "*relations must be kept and made productive on the long-term*", transparency in the achievement of tasks; providing trust to the employees; effective communication, involvement in all aspects of work - "*you start with the grunt work*", agility and attention to the occurrence of potential problems, prompt and efficient solutions for problems, proper remuneration of employees "*appropriate motivation - efficient work*".

## 5. Conclusion

The emigrant is subjected to transformation processes in the country of immigration, as a result of which he undergoes a series of socio-economic and identity changes noticed in his attitude, behavior and mentality on his return to the home country. The process of reintegration in the home country can be quick or slow, depending on the changes the emigrant faced. Experience in the country of immigration may, on the one hand, create difficulties in the readaptation of the emigrant, but on the other hand it can contribute to personal, family and professional development. In this paper, difficulties faced by the emigrant on returning to the home country and the ways of addressing them in the process of reintegration have been highlighted in a case study, where the central character employed the things learned and assimilated in the country of immigration. In the present study case, a successful one, reintegration was achieved gradually, and the problems occurred along the way were properly managed by the person concerned, but also with external support.

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