

Brain Drain in the Western Balkans

Brain drain is the key issue of the future!

The *spiritus movens* of contemporary social progress is not anymore the economy of production and trade, but the economy of ideas and creativity. The keys that open the doors to this new economy are education, culture and science!

According to psychologist Howard Gardner, artistic production can play a significant part in the development of wider range of intelligence and *when individuals discover their own creative powers, it can contribute their self-esteem and achievement*. The project Creative Europe, done in ERICArts, proves this point.

The most dramatic problem in the Western Balkans is a pronounced departure from creative capital, which is the best social resource that we have at our disposal today. The departure of *creative potential* from Serbia during the period from 1990 to 2000, created damage worth up to 12 billion dollars, as estimated by the experts. More than 84% of good and the best students of Belgrade University actively seek opportunities abroad even before they graduate.

Basic paradox of students' desire for leaving their country is the fact that they don't have a realistic perception about the conditions of living and working in the countries of European Union, which are basic object of desire for the majority of them. The survey conducted at Belgrade University has shown that around 95% of students have never been in any of the countries of European Union. They have created the image of the life on the West basically through media!

Similar patterns or "creative drains" are happening in Croatia, where 55% of the young do not see a future in their country.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina today 75 % of the young want to leave their country and go somewhere else in the world. The same situation is reported on in Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania.

The research that dealt with this issue haven't analysed artistic faculties apart, but we can definitely assume that the students from the artistic university have even bigger desire to live abroad. However, there is a long way from desire to accomplishment.

The phenomenon of permanent or temporary departure of artists to the countries of the Western Europe, above all, hasn't been analysed at all, neither there are some relevant data about it.

The basic reason of artists' temporary departure is the desire for gaining international affirmation and providing extra income. The artists that can directly join cultural industry, i.e. the industry of entertainment, such as designers, are those who cope easily and have possibilities to leave.

Western **scouts** actively search the region. At this point, scouts are the most dangerous ones. They particularly hunt for young musicians and designers (the age limit moves down), they invite them to join orchestras of young people and then they take them abroad. That way, foreign orchestras don't pay for extremely expensive musical education, but they get a finished product of top quality. That is how artists become an easy catch for scouts.

Independent departure of an artist depends on the possibilities of providing the survival. In the majority of cases, it is not related to their art, but to the possibility of finding alternative employments.

When it comes to the area of music, the artists that belong to the world of classical and world music are those who often leave. Goran Bregovic is certainly the most famous, but he is not a prime example. Classical musicians and opera singers leave only if they are offered a permanent or temporary engagement.

The experience of our musician Ms. Smiljka Isakovic says that the musicians of classical music leave for different reasons:

- Better economic conditions
- Professional improvement (if they get the opportunity to stay, they actually do)
- Need for change, desire to experiment

Extremely small number of these artists builds the career on previous or higher level. They usually reach lower levels or leave their profession.

Lots of musicians that haven't succeeded abroad, never come back because they don't want to admit that they have failed.

Film director and writer Goran Radovanovic believes that film professionals emigrate since the

- The success of our artists is often more valued abroad than in the region
- Hard working conditions
- Artists' hard position, especially the position of freelance artists

When it comes to the film industry, artists choose to use foreign funds instead of leaving. At the beginning of the 90s, a great number of artists- directors, actors, set designers and costume designers, have left the Western Balkans. However, they have come back, even the most successful ones, such as directors like Kusturica, Goran Paskaljevic and Denis Tanovic and they have continued to build their careers in the region. As for the actors that have left, they haven't succeeded in building their careers abroad, except for Rade Serbedzija, who mostly acts Russian generals and mobsters. The similar situation happened with other professions related to film.

The reasons for failure abroad are:

- Competition
- The rules of the game, different from the way the culture was financed in former Yugoslavia (mainly budget funding)
- Strong connection with the culture artists originate from and not being able to cope in the new cultural model
- Silent discrimination towards artists residents, even though their work is sometimes of more quality

The artists that have not succeeded in achieving their ambitions abroad, but have continued to live there, have changed their professions and left the field of artistic creativity. They haven't joined the artistic production of the environments they emigrated to.

Nevertheless, the Western Balkan cultures lost a significant creative potential.

I would also like to point out a few important facts in the context of this topic:

1. The size of a mentioned society should be taken into account. For example – if hundred musicians leave Russia, no one will consider

it as a serious problem. However, if a hundred musicians leave Serbia or Macedonia, this would be a problem. Also, if a hundred musicians emigrate from Russia to France, this will not make big changes in the cultural life of France. But, if these musicians come to Serbia, cultural life of Serbia will inevitably be changed.

2. The influence made on economic situation and cultural politics of countries in transition should also be taken into account. This influence is made by World Trade Organisation, World Bank, MMF, etc.

The experience of Serbia states that these international institutions influence greatly to inner economic and political situation and represent restrictive policy towards the development of cultural industries and cultural production which are exactly the fields that should provide artists with the employment opportunity. These fields are supposed to bond artists to the milieu they originate from.

The other important issue is copyright which is bought off the artists by corporations of cultural industries which are not stimulated to support the cultural industry development in the transition countries.

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