

POST-MIGRATION DYNAMICS: TOWARDS A NEW CONFIGURATION OF A TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACE

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It is a quintessential statement that Australia is, but for its indigenous people, a nation built on migration. Continuous immigration made modern Australia and its population growth and the economic development of Australia depend on it. Nevertheless it concurrently experienced a movement overseas of the recent settlers and native born. Currently approximately one million Australians or nearly five per cent of its total population live abroad for various reasons (Hugo, Rudd and Harris, 2003; Fray 2003); however, some will never return. The impact of these dynamic demographic movements on the transnational social space generated from *below* (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998, 1) through migration in former decades is the focus of this text. Consequently the migration process generates “international identifications encompassing ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities” (Anderson, 1991, 4). An emphasis is placed on changes in the configuration of transnational social space due to migration and generational dynamics, contextual changes in Croatia due to independence and its forthcoming membership in European Union.

Participation by migrant descendants in the transnational social space created by their parents under different social and political circumstances engenders new dimensions and challenges. However, their participation is qualified by various factors, including identity, heritage transfers, knowledge of the language and social capital intensity established across generations and space, together with a sense of belonging and cultural hybridity (Pieterse, 2004, 88-95). This prospective evolution engenders new challenges across distant proximities (Rosenau, 2000) creating new communication forms, activities, social dynamics, aspirations and policies.

Introductory discussion on transnational social space, cultural hybridity and language maintenance in migration establishes a framework for further analysis. The text continues with observations on Australian demographic dynamics, which is followed with a discussion on Croatian-Australian transnational social space, and on the place of the second generation within perceived transnation-

al dynamics. It concludes with observations on the potentials of a re-configured transnational social space in the post-migration era.

Theoretical framework

Among the major consequences of a migration process is the creation of a transnational social space across spatial distances embracing countries of migrant origin and settlement. Guarnizo and Smith (1998, 6, 21) identify transnationalism as a multifaceted and multilocal process, emphasising the locality and a sense of identity besides the “constitution and reproduction of transnational networks through material and symbolic exchange”. Similarly, Levitt (2001, 4, 21) analyses transnational experience of migrants who are keeping their feet in both worlds after they have settled in a new environment but continue to remain active in the place of origin in different ways, intensity, and in terms of dynamics. The development of a transnational social space from below is parallel to the process of becoming grounded during settlement in new social environment. Within that process migrants satisfy their own cultural and social needs, often through the appropriation of their own organizations and communal places (Lalich, 2004), creating institutional elements of a transnational social space. Such developments sustain major reference points in a transnational social space, such as language and cultural heritage transfers and maintenance, expansion of a communication space, support of hybrid identities, creation of alternative life opportunities and various invisible effects.

Transnational social spaces differ due to many factors including spatial distances, migrant aspirations, and the social context in the places of the origin and settlement. Most migrants continue to keep contacts with the place of origin, follow events and media, make visits, remit money, invest in households and establish business links. The key features of a transnational social space generated from below are communication in a native language and the existence of strong social capital which implies interplay of norms, trust, networks and solidarity (Putnam, 1993, 167; Bourdieu, 1993, 32-35; Coleman, 1990, 302). The key element in a transnational social space structure is social capital whose various forms, and in particular its bridging capacity, are considered to be a “transmission belt” in its formation and intensity (Faist, 2000, 123, 201).

Transnational dynamics is influenced by the context and diverse factors in social environments spanned by the migration process, including chain migration, retention of property rights, visits, participation in local public works and social life irrespective of absence. It is framed by the retention of language and heritage, participation in migrant community life and appropriation of communal places. Among many external and internal hindrances that could hamper its

intensity and dynamics are spatial distance, acculturation and assimilation, ideology, political pressures, policy measures, attitudes in a place of origin, passage of time, aspirations, levels of education, intermarriages as well as personal issues and traits such as ignorance and laziness. However, not all migrants participate in a transnational social space that is undergoing major changes within the process of intergenerational changes. It can be assessed that this is also a feature of the complex Croatian-Australian transnational social spaces that evolved in different patterns over the last century.

New actors in a transnational social space

Participation in transnational social space created from below descends from generations that passed it to descendants and other actors. Similar to the first generation, not all members of the second generation participate in it, but some do. This is best illustrated by a person of Croatian origin who publicly claimed that his favourite place to visit is Dubrovnik in Croatia as *My family is from there and I enjoy the history of the place;... old and new... But I admit I am biased.*¹ Such attitudes could be found among many migrant descendants as many developed a feeling of a dual sense of belonging. Some claim to feel even more attachment to the place of origin than to the place or country where they were born and reside. Clifford (1997, 2, 7) puts an emphasis on the emergence of fluid social actors, of people in transit experiencing “travel encounters” rather than on continuous existence of a fixed relation to a locality and single sovereignty. Also Melucci (2000, 61) pointed out that multiple bonds of belonging are created by the proliferation of social positions, associative networks and reference groups. The evident compression of time and space (Harvey, 2001, 123-4), due to technological revolution in communications and transport, further impacts on mobility, sense identity and preferences.

Intergenerational transfer of culture and language is a process parallel to the acculturation of the first generation. Consequently cultural hybridity commonly found among migrant descendants (Pieterse, 2004, 95) provides an important new dimension to transnationality. It implies a process of differentiation and exchange between the centre (origin) and the periphery (migrants) and a form of identity that is being produced by these conjunctions (Papastergiadis, 1997, 274). It is further remarked by Papastergiadis (2000, 143) how new energy emanates out of conjunction and juxtaposition, and not just by the sum of its elements connected by a hyphen, that is, in our discussion, Croatian-Australian. However, such phenomenon encounters various limits that could originate

¹ Tony Popovic, Top five, *The Sun Herald, Travel*, Sydney, 25. 1. 2009, 6.

not only from personal inclinations and inhibitions, but also by non-responsiveness and adverse attitudes in either social environment. Many migrant descendants identify themselves within the traditionally defined transnational social space, but encounter difficulties in communication due to the limited knowledge of the ancestral language.

Language

Through migration the reterritorialised (Deleuze and Guattari, 1992, 141-145) language is a key element of transferred culture and a major mode of communication within ethnic communities and with a place of origin. During migration language acquires a new space and is retained in every day usage and is transferred to the next generation with uneven success. Migrants' language, the local dialect and vernacular forms, often differ from the standard idiom in the country of origin which impacts on the language transfer, causing confusion and difficulties in attempts to learn language (Škvorc, 2005, 193). There is also a milieu impact in the settlement environment that discourages its application through the process of acculturation, education and lack of appreciation for other languages. Hence, the observation that language is considered to be the first victim of acculturation and intergenerational changes (Alba, 1990, 119; Waters, 1990, 116).

The ancestral language facilitates continuity of family contacts irrespective of spatial distances. It is maintained and transferred through family use, participation in community organisations and in cultural, religious, social and sport and activities. Family visits, cultural exchange, business and sports contacts together with ethnic media, including imported ones, facilitates not only information exchange and networking but also language retention in a new space. With such aims various ethnic communities establish language schools on their own or in conjunction with the official education authorities. Language can also acquire a new space through intermarriages, and lose it too, and other social contacts that open diverse new possibilities. It is stated how "fluency in an ethnic language may not be necessary" for boundary demarcation (Alba, 1990, 84). Consequently, among the effects of migration within the dynamic transnational social space and hybridization are an expanding identification and affinity potential of the ancestor language through use of a few retained words or phrases, if not as a communication tool.

Australian demographic dynamics

Among the outcomes of the World War Two was a drastic change in the Australian population policy that was reflected initially in a steep increase in migration from continental Europe besides the favoured migration from the United

Kingdom. Initially it meant arrival of 170,700 displaced persons and refugees from Europe by 1954 (Kunz, 1988, 43). The key feature of the Australian immigration policy since 1901, White Australia, disappeared thirty years later after large numbers of Vietnamese refugees were permitted to settle (Jupp, 2002). The diversification of the origin of Australian population is illustrated by the change in the share of all Southern European migrants from 60,450 (0.80%) among 7,579,358 inhabitants in 1947 (Price, 1963, 11; Price, 1979, A20) to 643,985 (3.60%) among 17,892,418 in 1996 and 592,511 (2.98%) among 19,855,292 in 2006 (ABS, 2008a; 1997). In total the share of people born overseas increased from 9.8% to 24.5% and 29.1% in the respective Census years.

The number of Croatian migrants increased tenfold over this period from approximately 5,020 settlers in 1947 (Price 1963, 11) to 50,991 in 2006 Census year (ABS, 2008a). According to 2006 Census data there were at least 118,046 persons of Croatian origin in Australia, although some observers indicate much larger numbers,² of whom 30,000 persons have at least one parent born in Australia. The Croatian language was spoken at home by 63,612 persons in 2006 (a decrease of 6,014 since 1996), including by 21,688 members of the second generation (ABS, 2008b; ABS 2003), indicating the extent of the language retention and the potentials within the established transnational social space.

Departures from Australia

Another major feature of the Australian demographic dynamics is in the increasing number of its inhabitants living abroad for an indefinite time period. Over the last three decades the ratio of permanent departures to arrivals increased from 21.7% in 1979—89/1999—2009 to 50.5% in the first decade of this century.³ According to the age structure from 1959—60 to 2008—9 year, the active working age group from 25 to 64 made nearly 61% of all permanent departures in comparison to over 13% of persons over 65. Dependants up to 14 years represented 17% of all permanent departures, while there were 9% in the group between 15 and 24 years. This data concur with findings by Hugo, Rudd and Kevin (2003, 44) that the vast majority among a researched sample of 2070 permanent departures were because of career reasons, professional development

² Drapac (2001, 246) cites Charles Price, who claims that there are over 180,000 people of Croatian background in Australia, and indicates the difficulties in making an estimate. Hoško (1996, 5) and Tkalčević (1992, 40) give an estimate of 200,000 Croatians in Australia, while in his analysis, Škvorc (2005, 190) arrives at 150,000 persons of Croatian origin in Australia.

³ Various series issued by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship used: Media Fact Sheet: Permanent Arrivals and Departures and Total Movements Data; Emigration.

and higher wages. These reasons are followed by life style changes, marriages and job transfers well ahead of education and personal reasons such as a desire to join families and friends, divorce and to expand business.

The background of people leaving Australia permanently and their destinations in continental Europe is very indicative. Among 81 thousand departures in the 2008/09 statistical year, over half were born in Australia, but only 1.2% in South-Eastern Europe, including 133 persons born in Croatia. Of those born in Australia nearly 68% were in the active age group from 24 to 54 years. However, the group older than 55 years is heavily represented by departures of people born in South-Eastern Europe, including in Croatia, with over 50% in comparison to 6.6% born in Australia and 11% of all permanent departures. While the Australian-born are leaving in search for career and employment opportunities, the departure of the South-Eastern European born is mostly linked with the retirement.

Similar indicators are gained from about 9850 persons who left Australia with the intent to settle in one of the South-Eastern European countries over a ten year period starting from 1998/99 statistical year. Among them more than 17% expressed their intent to remain for good in Croatia. In more detail, among 2919 born in Australia, 11% planned to stay in Croatia, though even those with the same intent had made up 19.7% of those born outside Australia. This indicator can be compared with the historical data by Price (1963, 102), who claimed that 45 % inter-war migrants returned to former Yugoslavia, while Šegvić (1953, 8) was more circumspect, indicating a return of 17.7% migrants. In the largest ever collective ethnic departure from Australia, nearly 20% of all pre-war Croatian migrants on this continent left for Yugoslavia in 1948—49. It is to be noted that only 14% were older than 55 years of age.⁴

Croatian-Australian transnational social space

In the second part of this text an attempt is made to present a broad framework of the Australian-Croatian transnational social space generated by migration, and in particular since World War Two, although it existed earlier (Lalić, 2010, 90; Lalić, 2010, 161-72). The stages of evolution of this particular transnational social space differed by the size, social and economic capacity, activities, communication patterns, prevailing ideology, as well as technological and political hindrances. The major social and political changes in early 1990s generated a new impetus to the earlier forms by eliminating ideological and political

⁴ National Archives of Australia PP240 /2 Outgoing Passenger List; Lalić (2010, 98-100).

hindrances and introducing wider institutional involvement. Such external developments generated a much more fluid situation in relation to earlier patterns. However, better understanding of the scope, dynamics and perspectives of the Croatian-Australian social space would require more thorough research on both sides of these “distant proximities”.

This text engages with some aspects of this transnational social space that evolved over former decades. In an attempt to identify its key elements several indicators on the settlement side, in this case Australia, have to be identified. These include migrant demographic structure and its spatial dispersal, communal institutional developments and the appropriation of facilities, culture transfer, language retention, patterns of individual and communal links with the place of origin. Among major hindrances for intra communal interaction in Australia is the huge spatial dispersal of major metropolitan cities where Croatian migrants mostly settled.

Like nearly all European migrant communities that started arriving in large numbers after the Second World War, the Croatian population in Australia is aging. Except for a small number of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, there has been insignificant migration from Croatia over the last several decades (Colic-Peisker, 2009—2010, 56-57). Only in Sydney were three churches appropriated and seven social clubs, including three with their own football fields (Lalich 2004). However, as a sign of the times, one club closed recently as have some other European migrant clubs since the start of this century. On the other hand, increasing need for the development of facilities for elderly citizens care is expanding, hence, besides the existing aged care places in Sydney, Canberra, Spearwood (Fremantle suburb in Western Australia) and Adelaide, a new aged care place is planned in Geelong, Victoria with a prospect of another one being built.

Changes in the demographic structure and in communal institutional priorities indicate that even data from the turn of century have to be treated with care. Among 22,250 Croatian speaking residents in Sydney in 1996 (EAC, 1998, 51) approximately 6,000 were users of social club facilities and around 14,500 attended religious services at the appropriated premises. Altogether, around 270 diverse activities were registered in these places providing grounds for consideration on the potentials of transnational activities as well (Lalich, 2004). The inevitable intergenerational change underlines the importance of these considerations of its impact on registered activities and therefore on its effects. Many among 40 clubs that compete at the annual Croatian football competition have players of other ethnic backgrounds. The degree to which migrant descendants, many young football players and juvenile folk dancers would replace their par-

ents and grandparents in communal activities depends on many factors, which includes the intensity of culture transfer and various limits imposed on their participation by the local social environment. An indicator of changes is that it is not only the local Croatian printed media have English language supplements to attract readers among descendants.

Convergence across distances

Spatial distance as a major obstacle for the development of Croatian-Australian social space is ameliorated by the disappearance of transport and communication hindrances along with the political ones. However, the changing demographic structure in Croatia and among migrants impacts on the nature and intensity of communication flows and of transnational social capital effects. Bridging social capital is probably becoming more prominent in comparison to the bonding one, as there may be less trust, social norms may differ, and networks would lose in intensity and would be more difficult to establish and keep.

Social and political dynamics since independence, and the increasing recognition of Croatia as a major European tourist destination⁵ opens new transnational opportunities. Furthermore, its prospective membership of the European Union in 2013 can be perceived as a major factor influencing future development as a potential “pull” factor for descendants (Tsuda, 2009, 24). Hence, the transferred language, cultural hybridity and inherited property rights acquire new significance under changing circumstances. The growing prominence of Croatia in some other fields, as also in sport and culture, makes it an attractive alternative for many aspiring descendants, among whom some have already acquired Croatian citizenship. Croatia is becoming an interesting destination not only for family and tourist visits, as approximately 4,000 migrants have returned there since independence. In their research Hugo and colleagues (2003, 23) indicate that approximately 1,300 retirees receive Australian pensions in Croatia in 2001.

Australia had for several migrant generations a significant pull factor for economic, security and political reasons. Today Croatia has a “pull” potential too, and not only for its diaspora. It is very close to other countries in the region and to important business centers, besides having a beautiful coast that offers not only summer attractions. Both countries allow for dual citizenship, leading to an access to European citizenship with additional career opportunities to many. The access to such advantages in the country of origin is often facilitated by the ease of the first contacts created by the generated sense of belong-

⁵ Croat d'azur: The new star of Europe, *The Sun Herald, Travel*, Sydney, 8. 6. 2008, 1, 20-21.

ing, persistence of family links, and the ability to start exchanges in the ancestral language.

Such perspectives encounter potential limits arising not only because of spatial distances and the limited participation of the second generation in communal activities. The insufficient language and heritage knowledge is another major hindrance; for example, while pop songs are sung in Croatian, the same persons continue with conversation in English. As already indicated, inevitably there is adverse impact of the local social environment, acculturation process, assimilation and intermarriages on potential convergences across space.

New generation in a transnational social space

It is remarked by Škvorc (2005, 28) that barely a half of the Croatian descendants in Australia are capable of understanding and speaking the Croatian language. Moreover, it is possible to assume that situation has worsened as there is a continuous decrease in numbers of Croatian language students at the lower educational levels (Šutalo, 2009—2010, 11; Škvorc, 2005, 195). Only at the tertiary level has enrolment been consistent since independence (Budak, 2008, 179), with a total enrolment of more than 3,000 students since the establishment of the Croatian Studies Centre at Macquarie University in Sydney in 1984. This development corresponds to the observation by Alba (1990, 79) that ethnic experience in using words or phrases from an ancestral language during 5 years among 16 recorded forms ranks as the fourth one with 29.8% intensity. Migrants' ancestral language is gradually losing ground as a major mode of communications in not only Croatian-Australian transnational social space, with major consequences for its content and dynamics.

A transnational framework will inevitably differ under the condition of a growing New generation predominance in comparison to its original framework generated by their migrant-parents. Various factors on both sides would define its dynamics, content and the involvement by new participants. Among possible constraints are spatial dispersion, organisational and regional distinctiveness, differentiation between migrant generations, levels of education, acculturation, (dis)inclination to maintain heritage and language, school and family obligations, personal interests and affinities, and inadequate knowledge about Croatia. It is observed that while migrants are still prepared to financially assist homeland, churches, clubs and nursing homes, they display little interest in financially supporting language education. Their most important investment in tertiary education, the Croatian Science Foundation, exists mostly on its capital established in 1980s; moreover its activities are now significantly supported by the Croatian government (Škvorc, 2005, 196).

The analysis of a sample of the headlines in a randomly selected twenty issues of "The New Generation" supplement in *Hrvatski vjesnik* from Melbourne over the 2010–11 period shows that, among 132 topics, 14 per cent relate to the Croatian society, while sports, culture, politics and other topics from Croatia together add up to the same ratio. The topics on Australian events barely reach 14 percent in researched English languages supplements, as the emphasis is placed upon local Croatian community events, with a very strong emphasis on community sport activities. These indicators display the preferences of the Croatian second generation in Australia. Research among Croatian and other ethnic communities indicates furthermore a low level of the second generation participation in community organizations (Lalich, 2004; Giorgas, 2008, 65). Hence, finding the modes and ways of attracting the second generation into communal activities is a major issue for many migrant communities. This situation significantly weakens the institutional infrastructure and the potential of the established transnational social space.

Challenges in a new Century

The inclinations and aspirations of the second generation together with new opportunities arising within a changing context will define a new dynamics of transnational social space. On the other hand Croatia will experience a new reality within the European Union, but also an aging population. Within such developments the position and acceptance of the New Generation will become a major issue due to prospective direct personal encounters with persons of the same origin but with poor knowledge of the language and local circumstances (Tsuda, 2009, 25). They will arrive without the shelter of the first generation and with the limited acquisition of the Croatian language which is to them primarily a mode of identification but not of primary communication. The key issue for the recipient society is in defining its relation towards transnational space and the aspirations, as well as the creative and working potential of its prospective new participants.

Policy considerations would have to identify dimensions of the established transnational social space, its dimensions and potentials, and issues arising from intergenerational changes, including the acceptance of descendants within the Croatian social structure. The returns of the first generation were not altogether successful in many countries (Tsuda, 2009, 3-6; Lalić, 2010, 116-122), while the post-migration structural configuration of the diaspora makes it an even more complex issue. Croatia is not the only country experiencing it. The Greek authorities expressed interest in continuing transnational relationships with its diaspora even after the first generation departed (Giorgas, 2008, 60). In a similar

vein the leading Italian migrant cultural institution in Australia emphasized a need to maintain the Italian culture and language for future generations (Comastri, 2009, 8). It is also of importance that Australian researchers are indicating the importance of considering the Australians living abroad as a national asset and emphasise the need to develop “policies that would nurture and maximise this asset” (Hugo, et al., 2003, 14-16).

It is apparent that various countries are contemplating transnational policies, including former migration destination countries, not only to facilitate contact with the second generation, maintain reterritorialised culture, and secure tourist income, but also as they compete for labour on the world market. Croatia would have to put forward a dynamic transnational policy targeting the second generation. It would have to avoid passivity, best exemplified by the inadequate support for language tuition, including in providing staff, to meet the needs of the Croatian language studies at Macquarie University where the tertiary student — teacher ratio is well below the Australian standard. A passive and inconclusive policy would inevitably gradually lead to the loss of a New generation and its potentials. The alternative to possible negative prospects would be in a well established transnational policy with defined forms, contents and dynamics that would provide for an outcome of significance for the future of Croatian society as well.

Concluding remarks

The demographic structure of Croatia and of its diaspora is changing and with it a transnational social space established by migrants. Dynamic political changes and expectations arising out of the forthcoming Croatian membership in the European Union impact on it already. The effects of communication revolution has brought these two spatially distant countries closer. There is a major demographic shift in Australia as a significant number of its citizens, expatriates, live and work overseas. Given such developments it is possible to ascertain how members of the New or the second generation, despite their poor communication skills in the Croatian language, would appropriate a major role in Croatian-Australian transnational social space. Their interests and aspirations inevitably differ from that of their parents, and their participation in this space would be defined by symbolic ties, property inheritance, tourist visits, as well as work and career prospects. The existing transnational social space as a dynamic bridge towards convergence of interests of segments of the second generation diaspora and the changing Croatian society requires an assertive policy approach of potentially mutual benefit.

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