

# Multiple Identification Processes on the Island of Korčula (Nested Identities)

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of this paper is to investigate the ways contemporary identification processes on the island of Korčula take place. The changes in the political situation during 1990s, as well as contemporary context of the accession of the Republic of Croatia into European integration, provided the new »arena« for the expression of different identifications. The positioning of identities into the wider context, either on vertical or horizontal level, is also important in these processes. The research was carried out at all the major settlements on the island of Korčula by qualitative methodological tools and ethnographic approach. The results indicate the existence of nested identities on the island of Korčula (ranging from supranational (European) to national and regional and finally to diverse local identifications and their situational and dynamic character. The nested identities on the island of Korčula demonstrate their mutual compatibility and the fact that not only identities of the higher order (regional, for example) comprise the identities of the lower order (local, for example); the reverse process also takes place. The members of seemingly close and similar island communities in fact have very differentiated local identifications that are very often equally important or even more important than identities of the higher order, such as national.*

**Key words:** *identification processes, multiple identities, nested identities, Korčula island*

*I am who I am and can not change it.  
I am Dalmatian, an inhabitant of Blato, an inhabitant  
of the Korčula Island and Croat.  
And... European too, more or less.  
(Female interlocutor from Blato, the settlement on the  
island of Korčula)*

## Introduction

Identity is a concept that for some time has already been in the focus of various scientific disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, political science, cultural anthropology and ethnology. Despite the identity definition such as »who you are«<sup>1</sup> or »common words for people's feeling about who they are«<sup>1</sup> seems almost understandable, it is »one of many cultural categories of the most exuberant manifestation and of the most multi-layered meanings«<sup>2</sup>. It seems impossible to comprehend all aspects of identity, and therefore researchers, for the sake of simplicity and limited time for the research (and in order to be able to carry out the analysis), »most frequently focus on investigating its particular element, as-

pect or symbol«<sup>2</sup>. Cultural anthropologists, ethnologists and sociologists from Croatia also focused their researches and deliberations to the various aspects of this relevant concept which »in texts never comes without adjectives«<sup>3</sup>. Some of them directed their research interest to the fact that the most diverse manifestations of material, spiritual or social culture can become a very efficient identity symbol of a community or a group<sup>4</sup>; the others focused on relations between culture, ethnicity and identity<sup>5</sup> or between identity and language<sup>6-9</sup>. A part of the research interest was directed to researching of complex feelings of ethnical, national and regional identities<sup>10-17</sup>, to enquiring of stereotypes that in the Croatian ethnography have been connected mainly to gender identities (female<sup>3</sup> or male<sup>18</sup>) as well as to investigating the influence of tourism on identity<sup>19</sup>. Here, I only indicated certain aspects of identity that have intrigued scientists, but the list of potential aspects of identity that could be of interest hasn't been completed.

In this work I focused on one of often mentioned aspects of identity, i.e. on the nested identity<sup>10,11,20</sup>. This feature of identity is completely in accordance with con-

temporary anthropological assumptions about its dynamic, fluid and situational character<sup>21</sup>. Stuart Hall pointed out that the traditional concept of identity as the completed entity, identical to itself and unchangeable through time is not tenable any more<sup>21</sup>. Traditional approach to some kind of identities comprises existence of particular »primordial qualities« that include arising actually from the feeling of intimacy, and not from a social interaction<sup>22</sup>. According to Arjun Appadurai primordial arguments include »all group sentiments that involve a strong sense of group identity, of we-ness, draw on those attachments that bind small, intimate collectivities, usually those based on kinship or its extensions. Ideas of the collective identity based on shared claims to blood, soil, or language draw their affective force from the sentiments that bind small groups«<sup>23</sup>. Hall emphasizes that identity is a construction, »never completed process«<sup>21</sup> and therefore he prefers the syntagme »identification processes«, despite the fact the term »identity« has been widely used not only in the scientific discourse. Consequently he is aware of the necessity to continue to use the term »identity«, but having in mind, as Bauman put it, that it is »allegedly a noun but behaves as a verb«<sup>24</sup>. Considered in such details identity becomes »a project on which individuals and groups are permanently engaged«<sup>25</sup>.

Identity as a project or as an identification processes can be realized at several levels – horizontal (lateral) and vertical, as historian Petar Korunić states<sup>26</sup>. According to him, horizontal identities mean identities that are equal by their social value, so called identities – roles, i.e. the fact that individuals simultaneously have various identities; for example, a person can in the same time be a woman (gender identity), a wife, a mother (family identity), a scientist (professional identity) and inhabitant of some settlement (group identity). Horizontal or lateral placement of these identities means that these identities have to be separated, which I don't find absolutely precise. Namely, I think that our professional identity shapes our private identity to a certain extent; that gender identity influences the professional identity and that the family identity affects the professional identity and vice versa. Therefore, I think it is incorrect, or better to say it is not correct enough that horizontal and lateral identities are separated. But since the fact about unavoidable mixing and influence of horizontal or lateral identities is not so important for this research, I will use terms horizontal and vertical identifications, because this concept seems suitable for better understanding (and simplifying) the nested character of multiple identities. The vertical level of identification processes implies the concurrent belonging of an individual person to different social identifications (local, regional, national, supranational), i.e. it implies identities in mutual hierarchical correlations<sup>26</sup>.

First the meaning of multiple and nested identities should be explained. For Marilyn B. Brewer, multiple identities exist in two basic (or three developed) forms<sup>27</sup>. In the first form multiple identities are completely separated and an individual »uses« them or changes them de-

pending on a situation. The second type of multiple identities Brewer defines as dual, with two subvariants: compound identity and nested identity. Compound identities imply partial compounding of identities while nested identities imply the fact that one identity comprises the other (compare<sup>10,28</sup>). Medrano and Gutierrez, in the paper on nested identities in Spain, divide nested identities into identities of higher and lower level, whereas the identity of the higher level comprises the identity of the lower level (for example: the European identity comprises the national one, and the national comprises the regional one etc.)<sup>28</sup>. The mentioned authors indicate that in the literature on nested identities prevails the attitude about incompatibility of these identities or the attitude that these identities are a part of a continuum scale<sup>28</sup>; but they emphasize that empiric research indicates just the opposite: the nested identities are at the same time multiple and situational<sup>28</sup> and mutually compatible<sup>29</sup>. In the case of inhabitants of Hong Kong and changes that happened in their identity declarations after Hong Kong was returned to China, Brewer showed how declaring one's identity depends on a situation<sup>27</sup>. Edward J. Lawler's ideas contributed primarily to a theory of a rational choice but in this context he made some presumptions important for understanding how the feeling of belonging and commitment to collective nested identities were formed. According to Lawler the term »collective identities« means any two groups with one embracing the other. Such definition enables him to apply his deliberation results to, let say, a region of a nation, a clique within a larger political party, a department of a university, a department of a corporation etc.<sup>30</sup>. Concerning the choice of expressing feelings of belonging to one of the nested identities Lawler pointed out two »rules«. The proximal »rule« presumes actors stronger bonding with the society subgroup, i.e. the local community, than with the state. The distal »rule« presumes the opposite issue – actors stronger bonding with the more remote overwhelming collectivity, for example with the state, than with the local community<sup>30</sup>. Such choice of belonging is not final and in time it can experience changes (acc. to<sup>30</sup>).

In Croatia the peninsula Istria is a very good example of such changes. Banovac pointed out the intensified manifestation (during the population census obtruding »or-or« variant of identity choice) of the regional identity in Istria, in the context of more intensive processes of the national homogenization in 1990s<sup>29</sup>. Some ten years later, during the next population census, the number of Istrian citizens declaring themselves regionally was significantly lower; this confirms Lawler's thesis about changing of principles of choosing the kind of commitment, as well as the Banovac conclusion, made previous to the 2001 population census, that an individual »chooses« the identity s/he finds more important at that moment<sup>29</sup>. It clearly points out that multiple nested identities make a part of reality of each person, and that »giving priority« to any of these identities depends on context, i.e. on situation. In the case Banovac mentions it was clearly a kind of reaction to the strong processes of national homogeni-

zation in 1990s; the population census in 2001 shows that the pressure was not so strong, resulting in weaker reaction to it<sup>29,31</sup>.

For Joseph multiple identities are unquestionable and they do not apply only to different roles we have (or play in Goffman's sense<sup>32</sup>) in comparison to others, but also to multiple constructions of others' identities – as we can not cognize the other/s completely, we construct his/their identity for ourselves, and this is something everybody does the moment s/he comes into contact with the other/s. As a result it comes out that there are many versions of you – each person letting you into its mental space has a version of you. And everybody treats the version of the other as the real one<sup>1</sup>.

In scientific papers nested and/or multiple identities are very often being discussed in connection with immigrants, national minorities or nations constructing their national identity on coexistence of various ethnic groups, for example United States of America. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century the term hyphenated identity got the pejorative note and some American presidents (and not only them!) publicly questioned the »patriotic feelings« of persons expressing their feeling of multiple identities<sup>33</sup>. This situation has changed, but the question of dual identities has still been actual, and not only in countries like United States of America.

In the Croatian anthropological literature problem of multiple identities was most frequently studied in context of national minorities, regardless was it the Croatian national minority outside the boundaries of Croatia<sup>10,34</sup> or the particular national minority on a territory of Croatia<sup>14</sup>.

On the other hand, in this paper I deal with coexistence of multiple nested identifications and their situational and contextual expressions by islanders of the island of Korčula, that belong to none of national minorities in the Republic of Croatia (or at least have not publicly declared such belonging to the researchers), and that are not immigrants into Croatia. It, of course, doesn't mean that members of various recognized and unrecognized national minorities don't live nor work on the island of Korčula; it could just mean that they haven't taken part in this research or that they haven't declared to the researchers their status of a member of a national minority, for any reasons (reasons can vary from hiding the ethnic belonging to finding it absolutely irrelevant in everyday life). As this research did not focus on members of national minorities, their particular perspective wasn't included in this work.

The nested character of multiple identities could be the topic for research in almost every corner of the world. Having gained independence in 1990s, and having recently signed the accession treaty to the European Union, Croatia is a very good empirical case for studying complex processes of constructing the Croatian national identity. Although today the Republic of Croatia is divided into 20 administrative units (*županije*) (plus the City of Zagreb with the same administrative status), people are expressing their feelings of belonging in relation

to the historically formed regions such as *Dalmacija, Slavonija, Istra, Zagorje, Gorški Kotar, Primorje, Međimurje, Baranja* etc. The success of some regional political parties from Istria and Slavonia shows that people more and more tend to use their regional identities in order to achieve certain political goals. Although in contemporary Dalmatia (the Roman province Dalmatia was broader term than the contemporary Dalmatia is) the political parties that base their program on the idea of regional decentralization, have not been much present nor successful, the regional Dalmatian identity is far from not-existing. Since regional territories are far from being homogenous, Korčula, one of the southern Adriatic islands (and 6<sup>th</sup> by size of all Croatian islands) was a good enough location for research on nested character of identity in Croatia. The island was colonized by Greeks in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, and named *Κόρκυρα Μέλαινα* (Korkira Melaina, meaning Black Korkira). According to Apollonius of Rhodes, the Argonauts named the island while passing nearby, supposedly after the abundance of forest on the island<sup>35</sup>. The Romans continued to call the island *Corcyra Nigra*. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Slavic people started to inhabit the island and in the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus noted the Croatian name for the island, *Kurka* or *Krkar*<sup>35</sup>. After the fall of Roman Empire, the island changed a lot of rulers. Some of them ruled for a long period of time, such as Venetians (1420–1797) and Habsburgs (1815–1918) while others remained shortly on the island<sup>36</sup>. After the World War I, the island was occupied by Italian regime and later became the part of the *Kraljevina SHS*. After the World War II the island became the part of *FNR Jugoslavija*, and after the Croatian War of Independence the part of the Republic of Croatia. Today, according to the last census the island has 15688 inhabitants<sup>37</sup>. The interlocutors for the research were chosen by using the existing social network of the researchers and, later, by using the snowball method. However, in some cases (since the researcher wanted to interview interlocutors from all nine major settlements on the islands) the interlocutors were recruited in situ. Although we didn't follow a statistical pattern in choosing the interlocutors, our aim was to have interlocutors of different gender, age and education level. The incomers were included in the research as well, since their perspective is also of the same importance

## Research Results – Levels of Multiple Nested Identities

I will start the analysis with feelings of belonging to Europe, i.e. with so called European supranational identity »under construction« as the, so called, »highest« level (in this particular research) of nested identities (I have excluded the global level which, although important, wasn't present in the discourse of our interlocutors as something significant). Saying »under construction« I mean the active engagement of European Community in forming the European identity in citizens, pointed out by

numerous authors. Namely, although from the very beginning it was designed as the economic community, soon enough the need to form the European people<sup>38,39</sup> arouse and lot of actions had been taken in order to create the feeling of belonging and of the European identity. It was culture that was recognized as the agent contributing to reaching a state of consciousness of citizens of European Community about the common European identity. Creating the European culture became in 1990s one of the most important strategies accentuated in numerous documents; the aim was to strengthen and promote the identity of Community and its image for its citizens, as well as for the rest of the world<sup>38–40</sup>. For majority of interlocutors the terms European Union and Europe represent synonyms that both imply high, and therefore desirable, civilizing level. However, some of interlocutors were aware of the difference between the idea of Europe based on the civilizing and cultural values and Europe as economical and political community (EU):

*O.k., now that we say Europe we have on mind a kind of economic and political community. But yes, I feel my self totally European.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

Majority of interlocutors consider themselves Europeans, not only because of geographical location (Croatia is a part of the European continent), but especially because the idea of European-ness is usually connected with notions such as Greek and Roman civilizations, the Roman law, Christianity, the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, all symbolizing the high level of civilizing reach (for such Eurocentric idea see<sup>41</sup>).

Some of interlocutors expressed their opinions about island of Korčula having reached this civilizing level for a long time and therefore unquestionably belonging to Europe:

*We were Europe before Europe itself; we had the spirit of Europe before.* (Male interlocutor from Korčula town)

*I will again (speak) about culture and tradition. Considering that Europe has been present here since ancient times. We have been in this very same Europe for a very long time.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

Attitudes by which interlocutors rationalize belonging of the island of Korčula to the mentioned circle of the European civilization can be classified in several themes or motives.

Most frequent of them imply the discourse of »islandness« of Korčula island. The Croatian islands, including the island of Korčula too, face huge problems with depopulation, and the islanders themselves are also highly aware of the negative connotation »life on the island« can have. However, together with the rhetoric of isolation and difficult life on the island, the rhetoric of islandness with completely different connotations appears as well. One of them is the issue of belonging to the Mediterranean basin which unquestionably bonds the Adriatic (and Mediterranean) island of Korčula with Europe:

*We are Mediterranean people. Being Mediterraneans we belong to the whole Europe.* (Male interlocutor from Kneže)

The idea of the Mediterranean region as a synonym of Europe (probably it would be more precise to say it is a synonym for civilized manner of life) origins from the Ancient Times (Greek and Roman civilizations). It was then that opposition (and a stereotype at the same time) between uncivilized barbarians in the North and deceitful, corrupted, apolitical and lethargic southerners from Orient was generated; these extremes were very different from the »golden middle« that just happened to exist in the Mediterranean region, the geographical region of those practicing this kind of discourse<sup>5</sup>. The idea of Antique inheritance, connected with the Mediterranean region is, together with some other ideas (such as Christianity, the Enlightenment, the industrial revolution symbolizing progress etc.) in the very center of Eurocentric view.

In the above mentioned quotation Mediterranean is used as a synonym of a civilization (i.e. Western Europe); the fact that Korčula is a Mediterranean island some interlocutors interpret in the above mentioned way due to the fact that the island has been connected with the whole world by seaways. Hence, »islandness« of Korčula does not imply a state of isolation; it implies just the opposite – openness to various influences and contacts:

*Whatever [settlement] is situated at the sea(side), near the sea, it is, how to say it, it is generally more open, everything is much more open to influences and various contacts* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

A maritime tradition so characteristic for islands, and for the island of Korčula too<sup>35</sup>, enabled people earning for their lives by this tradition get acquainted with the world, which, in its turn, according to some interlocutors, brought them closer to Europe in comparison to some others, who, due to their geographical position, could not reach such experience.

After the Croatian War of Independence in 1990s and after the Republic of Croatia gained independence, the »fear of the Balkans«, excellently analyzed by Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin<sup>42</sup> became present in the public discourse wrapped into the fear of Yugoslav integration comeback and permanently repeated by political elites suited by such kind of fear as the excellent counterbalance to »European integrations«. It is understandable that some interlocutors use the mentioned dichotomy between the Balkans and Europe, to mark their belonging to the European cultural circle:

*Well... We are. Why are we Europeans? We always put it this way, if we live on the coast/waterside (laugh), we are in Europe. That we are in Europe. They say we are the part of the Balkans, but we always say it is them who are on the Balkans, not we (laugh).* (Female interlocutor from Račišće)

Another motive that appears in the interviews reflects the rhetoric according to which the high leveled culture and tradition of the island of Korčula have enriched Europe, and thus locate the island into the European milieu. Elaborating such attitudes interlocutors mention particular cultural attainments of the island of

Korčula as well as of the wider geographical area (Dubrovnik region, or even wider – Dalmatia). The Korčula Statute, being the first not only in Croatia but in this part of Europe<sup>35,36</sup>, numerous scientists and writers of this region (most frequently Marin Držić), diplomacy of the Republic of Dubrovnik, particular achievements of the ancestors, such as applying conditions of quarantine or slavery termination, were usually mentioned in that context. It is interesting that even the fact of Venetian ruling over this region over 300 years was mentioned as the argument supporting the »already (being) in Europe« thesis.

*Because we have, really, from the point of history and culture, enriched this world, in many senses.* (Male interlocutor from Vela Luka)

*I think we have been a part of the European cultural identity, quite great part, I mean the significant part of it. Europe could not function without our, lets say, our cultural heritage in Dalmatia. It could not function without, lets say, the cathedrals in Trogir or Šibenik, or without such heritage as Dubrovnik...* (Male interlocutor from Vela Luka)

Other interlocutors talk about contribution of »our« people to Europe, and frequently Marko Polo is mentioned in that context:

*I think that, starting with Marco Polo, who traveled to Asia and followed by many people from Korčula who contributed to Europe significantly* (Female interlocutor from Pupnat)

*Many people from this island think that we have quite a history and other attributes sufficient to be introduced to Europe. Yes, we have strong foundations for Europe. For example...(...)..., here no importance has been paid to Marco Polo, but at the same time, this is a famous name in Europe.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

A motive that doesn't appear often in the interviews, but is, in my opinion significant, mentions the positive (economic) impact of tourism, as something that provides the island with certain »European value«.

*Well, mainly because of this tourism ...(...)... And she has just told, she is married to a Greek and has been in Greece, and coming to Korčula she expected it to be something similar to Greece, but she told she was pleasantly surprised seeing how people here dress, she didn't expect it, she told it was just like in Paris. She said that Korčula is more advanced in comparison to Greece. In this aspect Korčula is the center of Europe.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

Although this research was not about attitudes on accessing of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, questions about the European nature of Korčula island or about personal feelings of the European, supranational identity, triggered statements according to which there is no need to truckle to Europe or that we are not really ready for Europe (implying indirectly that Europe is something superior to us!). Some of interlocutors emphasized numerous problems existing »in Europe« or are

very critical about rules Croatia has to obey in order to get approbation to accessing. One interlocutor expressed an interesting opinion how the European identity becomes more prominent by just talking about the European Union and accessing of the Republic of Croatia to EU.

## National Identity

Analyzing interviews I soon realized the feeling of the national identity is »very« important to our interlocutors. Some of them declared their national identity by statements of semi-jocular note: »Huge Croat. Croat. Yes, hundred percent«. Some interlocutors discussed the national population structure of certain settlements (I have to mention that none of the research questions was formulated in this way, but some interlocutors themselves provided the data) emphasizing prevalence of the Croatian population in the settlement, for example. »Twenty nine percent of Croats, the rest is mixed population«. To the question about their national feelings, majority answered they consider themselves Croats, mainly emphasizing that it is something self-understanding:

*I would say – the Croat. I have always been a Croat without paying any special attention to it. And even then I was a Croat.* (Female interlocutor from Smokvica)

*...it comes without saying...Croatian-ness...* (Female interlocutor from Vela Luka)

These quotations show the situation in which identity declaration is in accordance with Lawler distal rule<sup>30</sup>, when actors bond to a higher extent with distant, more overwhelming sense of collectivity.

Nevertheless, some interlocutors find the national identity primarily connected with a civil component, and male interlocutor from Blato stated that being a Croat in the first place means to be a citizen of Croatia. Similarly, other interlocutors believe the national identity should be based on the citizenship too.

*I think it is good if somebody is born in Croatia, that such person is considered to be a little Croat. ...(...)... This person is not a Chinese and never will be a Chinese, it will always be a Croat born in Croatia.* (Male interlocutor from Kneže)

Since to some of our interlocutors the local identity was of the same importance as the national identity or even more important, some of them explained that the feeling of the national identity is automatically comprised by the feelings of the local identity.

Concept frequently bonded with the feelings of the national identity is pride:

*Well, everyone has a sense of pride because of his/her country.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

*It is quite, quite important to me, I am proud being a Croat, and I mean I am glad, through a prism of history, that Croatia, not having a state through history now has it – and I just live at that period of time ... It is hard, because people are of every sort and kind, it is not perfect,*

*but I am very pleased to be a Croat.* (Male interlocutor from Blato)

*Essential... Well, being asked, I am not ashamed to declare myself as Croat. I am glad about it, why wouldn't I be? This, this... and I am proud, I am, why shouldn't I be? I can say I am.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

Few of interlocutors mentioned even nationalism, but didn't qualify it negatively, which is the usual public and political discourse, i.e. as the government elite presents and labels it (so called official antinationalism (cf.<sup>43</sup>)); they spoke about nationalism in the positive, patriotic (or non-chauvinistic) sense: »A Croat. Eager, but not in the sense of nationalism, just as... an intense patriot. I say that I am a nationalist, not a chauvinist, but nationalist I am«. The same interlocutor explains how the meaning of the word chauvinism (for him!) is connected with choosing the marriage partner by the principle of (the same) nationality: »Well, there is twenty nine percent of Croats here, with no chauvinist at all, because many of them married women of Serbian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Montenegrin and other nationalities. It means nobody is bordered by this fact«.

Some interlocutors even emphasize that without nationalism, which they put into connection with patriotism, it is not possible to be a Croat:

*Well... to be a Croat it is necessary to be the patriot, to be the patriot. One should be slightly nationalistically oriented. Yeah! A person without the nationalistic mood (laugh)...well, such person can not be anything. And without being a patriot, such person is again nothing... (...).... Such person doesn't know its origins. It would be better for such person not to exist. For a person not recognizing Croatia is his/her mother, the second mother, the better solution would be not to be born at all. Such people are toadies, they are people that... I won't say it would be better them not to live, but such people are double dealers, people you can't rely on. They are traitors, this is not, this, this is simply... There is a lot of such people in Croatia. They claimed all credit to be Croats, at those times, but they were not.* (Male interlocutor from Kneže)

This quotation implicates, among other things, with restrained critics of public, effusive and hypocritical expression of one's national feeling, i.e. of Croatian-ness, which appears to be quite common attitude. Sometimes such attitudes are accompanied by essentialistic ideas about the national identity.

*A Croat... (...)... is not a person declaring to be a Croat. A Croat is one loving the homeland in which s/he lives, valuing its merits, the native language, then his/her production, family, church, local character, investing here avoiding aimless world wandering. Because you can be presented by nothing save issues I listed.* (Male interlocutor from Žrnovo)

Others bond Croatian-ness with tradition and culture:

*It means that I am a part of the nation with its own history, having been living here for some time. It does not mean that I do not belong to any political party, that I do*

*not follow any ideals, it means that I was born to, lets say the tribe inhabiting this region, as they say, from the seventh century.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

*It was my granddad and my grand granddads that influenced me. It proves what I am, and there are no peculiarities differing me from other nations being proud to be Germans, Checks, Slovaks, to be Italians etc. This is how I (feel) about my nation...* (Male interlocutor from Lumbarda)

Some people had strong sense of the national identity during the period of ex-Yugoslavia, under the socialist regime, when it was not very wise or opportune to declare the Croatian national identity: »I always declared myself as a Croat, never as a Yugoslavian«. Due to the fact that in ex-Yugoslavia, members of some families had problems because of declaring the Croatian national feelings, in these families the national feelings have been nourished as something very significant, comprising the suffering component caused by the national feeling:

*My mother's father used to be really inveterate Croat; he was even arrested because of his Croatian-ness. When Yugoslavia was formed he didn't agree with it and joint communists. So it happened that my mother was raised in such spirit.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

*I am and always will be the Croat. My father suffered a lot because of his national feeling. But today this means nothing... everybody here declares to be a Croat just for interest.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

Majority of our interlocutors showed by their statements that they are not burdened by national belonging. Having this in mind I believe it is more precise to interpret them as people aware of their nationality without paying to it any kind of special importance.

*I don't know, if asked, O.K., I would say I was the Croat, but generally I am not obsessed by nationality... (...)...I am annoyed by pointing out Croatian-ness or emphasizing it. I find it stupid and primitive.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

*(I am) the Croat, the most modest one, neither great nor small.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

*Neither we were great Yugoslavians during ex-Yugoslavia, nor we are now, at the time of Croatia, great Croats.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

*It is nothing special. I mean, I am not ashamed, but at the same time it is nothing special. It is simple, here I am, being the Croat, here I was born and here I live. Living in ex-Yugoslavia I was the Croat by nationality and Yugoslavian by living in that country. ... (...)... I am not especially interested in any kind of nationality.* (Male interlocutor from Smokvica)

Exceptions are people declaring importance of their national identity only on occasions of sports events with participation of our national football representation.

*Nothing... (...)... Absolutely nothing. Only if watched and supported our football representation playing. It re-*

*ally means nothing to me ...* (Male interlocutor from Vela Luka)

Language, i.e. speech is very significant element in the processes of identification, although there are some examples indicating that the language has not always been the key element of integration and differentiation in comparison to others<sup>10</sup>. In this research opinions about the language importance for the national (Croatian) identity vary from emphasizing the importance of this connection to the complete denying the connection between the national feeling and the spoken language.

*To have my country, to have my language!!!* (Male interlocutor from Korčula town)

*As an expert I would say yes. Yes. As an expert. But as a person I would say no, no. Not at all. It is important how you feel, how you talk.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

The situation is neither simple nor unambiguous, which can be seen from interview with interlocutors that are more aware of issues concerning the difference between standard and local variants:

*O yes, it is very important, for example, at public events, or at any institutions where the standard Croatian language should be used. I am deeply annoyed by our politicians who still do not have reached the level of consciousness that progress in any social area, including politics, science etc. means cherishing of the standard Croatian language. But, not forgetting your idiom. At public occasions the standard Croatian language should be used, but speakers actually use anything but the standard language. They use most different idioms and as an expert I am concerned by it very much. And look how the written language is used, with no rules of orthography at all. The common idea is that since it is our native language there is no need to learn it extra or to follow the experts.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

This quotation reveals that some people find knowledge of the standard Croatian language necessary as well as its usage in official situations, but nevertheless they find it necessary to pay the same attention to the local idiom.

Although the qualitative research does not make it possible or desirable to make a general conclusion, it seems to me that the feelings of the national identity among our interlocutors on the island of Korčula can be condensed in the statement of one of female interlocutors:

*I am not the extreme nationalist, but I am glad ... to say that I am the Croat ...and...I love Croatia... this is something that belongs to us ...* (Female interlocutor from Žrnova)

## Regional Identity

The next, so called »lower«, level of nested identities or identifications of the lower rank implies the regional identity. As the island of Korčula geographically belongs to the region of Dalmatia, the common conclusion is that

inhabitants living in Dalmatia feel themselves Dalmatians. The importance of the regional identity feeling can bring us to its primary importance and primary expression, just as it used to be in Istria. However, unlike, for example in Istria, according to the 1991 population census no regionally classified people were registered on the island of Korčula<sup>44</sup>, while the 2001 population census registered insignificant number of regionally declared people (for example in the municipality of Korčula only nine people declared themselves regionally (0.15%), in the municipality of Lumbarda only one person (0.12%), while in municipalities of Blato and Vela Luka nobody)<sup>45</sup>. Although these population censuses could indicate that the feelings of the regional identity on the island of Korčula, especially in comparison to the Istria region, are not of particular importance, it is not quite true. Namely, a population census is a special category of questionnaire where people usually provide data from their personal identification documents, and these documents are very strictly and limitedly designed, not providing possibility to express all personal identification preferences. In the procedure of issuing personal documents people will have to choose one of generally accepted categories and instead of declaring in the column »Nationality« as undefined or anything similar. A population census provides a possibility of a regional defining as well as the column Other and Unknown, so that people can identify themselves according to their feelings. In effect, however, most frequently data from personal documents are offered to cataloguers; concerning data from personal documents nationality is mainly equalized with citizenship. Therefore, comparison with results of Marijeta Rajković research about multiple identities of Czechs in Jazvenik is very interesting; the researcher came to the conclusion that based on personal documents of inhabitants of Jazvenika one could flair only few Czech live there<sup>14</sup>.

The above mentioned data for Istria evidence primacy in certain identification processes in Istria, while on the island of Korčula the regional identity and the expression of the regional identity are important; however in some formal situations, such as a population census these feelings are less important or »ranked lower« (in comparison to Istria, for example). Results of this research indicate that the regional, Dalmatian identity, has been very important and that it has been expressed intensely. In the course of this research, at some time majority of interlocutors declared themselves as Dalmatians: »*By all means we do feel ourselves to be Dalmatians...*« (Female interlocutor from Blato). This fact seems self-understanding, primarily because of the geographical belonging to the region of Dalmatia.

*Geographically we belong to Dalmatia.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

Yet, a part of interlocutors think that introducing themselves as Korčula inhabitants (islanders) or as inhabitants of some settlement on the island is sufficient to be regionally positioned, and that there is no need to emphasize the Dalmatian identity, because it is clear on the background of the local identification.

*At the first place I would say I am from Smokvica on the island of Korčula. And it is understood that I am from Dalmatia.* (Female interlocutor from Smokvica)

*Anywhere in Croatia... I believe if I say that I am from Korčula, probably everyone knows that I am from Dalmatia.* (Male interlocutor from Korčula town)

*Yes I would, well it depends who wants to know, and I would say I am a Dalmatian. After that I would add that I am from Korčula, so people knowing something about Croatia would know Korčula is a part of Dalmatia, so there is no need to say that I am a Dalmatian too.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

Anyway, some of them would not introduce themselves as Dalmatians because:

*Well, because... I think Korčula is good enough destination to explain where I come from... and I suppose people know where it is...* (Male interlocutor from Blato)

Emphasizing the regional identity depends also on where (indirectly it means to whom, too), the identity is supposed to be declared:

*Outside Dalmatia I declare as Dalmatian.* (Male interlocutor from Vela Luka)

*Yes... I declare as Dalmatian, to indicate where I come from. But here, we islanders don't have to say we are Dalmatians. I mean... to people from Korčula island, Hvar island and Brač island.* (Male interlocutor from Vela Luka)

So it comes that being in Zagreb some interlocutors would declare themselves as Dalmatians, although they find their local Korčulan (island) identity more important.

*I: Would you declare as Dalmatian?*

*X: Being in Zagreb, yes...*

*I: Do you prefer to say you are a Dalmatian or from the island of Korčula?*

*X: From Korčula.* (Male interlocutor from Blato)

Other interlocutors accentuate that they have never introduced themselves by their regional identity, although they do not think it could be any kind of problem, because people from other Croatian regions declare themselves regionally:

*I: Have you ever introduced yourself as a woman from Dalmatia?*

*X: No, I have never introduced myself this way. ... (...)... Somehow I find Dalmatia to be too wide concept for that. It really covers too much. Yes.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

Because of negative connotations regionalism in Croatia, not only the Dalmatian regionalism, faced in the past in the Croatian political and public discourse, a part of our interlocutors explained their attitudes about belonging to Dalmatia and declaring as Dalmatians in this way:

*... it became complicated without any reason, this case about being Dalmatians. Of course we are Dalmatians. Of course we are, this is what differs us from inhabitants of Slavonia, Zagorje, Istria, as well as from all others. How-*

*ever, for the last fifteen years people tried to speculate about it and it annoys me. If I... Good Lord, if I go abroad I will first introduce myself as a person from Croatia.* (Male interlocutor from Korčula town)

*One of our ex-ministers...( )... once introduced himself as a ... south Croat! [and thus avoiding to say; »From Dalmatia« or that he is a Dalmatian.]* (Male interlocutor from Žrnovo)

Intensity of the local identity varies from person to person, so some of them can state the following:

*He would rather introduce himself as a Dalmatian then as Croat, belonging to Croatia.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

### Local Identifications on the Island of Korčula

It seems to me that local identities on the island are rather emphasized and essential to majority of interlocutors. However, identification processes are never unambiguous, so it happens that feeling of identity on the island of Korčula consists of several layers. There is the special category represented by incomers to the island, whose feeling of identity is either very ambivalent or is simply not expressed so strongly. In declaring ones identity, for majority of interlocutors, local identifications prevail, as following quotations show:

*From Blato on Korčula, usually that. Seriously. I never say I am from Dalmatia.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

*Yes. I still have been a woman from Korčula, I think so, I married the man from Račišće and I live in Kneže, I say so, but I still have been from Korčula.* (Female interlocutor from Kneže)

*I would always say that I come from Korčula.* (Male interlocutor from Korčula town)

*Blajka [meaning a woman from Blato in local idiom], yes. From Blato. Well, from Korčula, and from Blato. To islanders I say that I am from Blato, but to the others I say that I am from Korčula.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

*Well, no other possibility, I am from Korčula, from any point of view, here I am and that's it.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

*I am from Korčula. Korčula is well known island, it occurs on every world map. And everybody with at least minimum education could easily find Korčula on a map.* (Male interlocutor from Žrnovska Banja)

*How to say, first of all I am from Korčula. I believe it is the higher level.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

Michael Donley, author of the guide *The Island of Marco Polo*, noticed something similar when asking his host from the island of Korčula, according to his own estimation, »tricky« question, does he feel primarily a Croat or a Dalmatian. His host transferred the question to his wife, originating from the island of Vis. And she



answered: »First of all I would say that ... I come from the island of Vis!«<sup>46</sup>. Although the author characterized this answer as clear, honest and typical for Dalmatian islanders, this quotation confirms that local identifications are often more important than regional or national once, being at the same time in accordance with Lawler proximal »rule«<sup>30</sup>. Interlocutors' statements in frames of this research multiple layering of revealing identification processes and indicate dynamism Barth<sup>47</sup> and Hall<sup>21</sup> wrote about.

Incomers to the island are important representative sample of interlocutors, first of all because the island has not been isolated any more (if ever); because of cases of choosing the marriage partner outside the island are quite frequent; because of cases of »returning« onto the island of grandparents; because there are numerous cases of immigration from other islands, and from other regions of Croatia, (and not only seasonally) because of jobs. Some incomers came as refugees during the Croatian War for Independence, and stayed on the island, mainly from Bosnia. Seasonal workers from Bosnia or other regions of Croatia form a special group. They have been working on the island »seasonally« for years, so, they are a kind of representatives of the island too. The fact that on the island there are more and more incomers the native islanders comment in different ways:

*Well, in my opinion ... Korčula has been colonized by many people, when I read obituaries I don't come across a familiar name.* (Female interlocutor from Korčula town)

Incomers about whom locals speak comment their status:

*Well, I couldn't say yet that I am a Žrnovka (a woman from Žrnova)... I can not say it yet. No, I don't feel I belong to Žrnovo completely. These are, this is a story at its beginning... I have lived for many years in Korčula, so that... Žrnovo is, so to say, just the beginning of the story. Who knows, maybe in twenty years from now I would say that I feel as the real Žrnovka. ...(...)... I am going to accept their way of life. This is the normal way. We, the newcomers, don't have many chances stay ourselves, stay ourselves. Because we are a minority. Everywhere are only native inhabitants of Korčula, locals.* (Female interlocutor from Žrnovo, incomer to the island)

*I sometimes ask myself ... the same... I ask myself, well.. I am not Velalučanka (female citizen of Vela Luka), really... Because I do not have this characteristic of them, I am not, probably I have not caught... I have anything I could say Vela Luka... gave to me or that I have imbedded into myself ...(...)... So... No, I am not Velalučanka, I am not, a... but I live here ...* (Female interlocutor from Vela Luka)

Some interlocutors are aware how difficult the situation can be for incomers and they emphasize that »everybody came from some other place to the island, so incomers should be accepted«. It of course implies their adaptation:

X: *I think a Korčulanin is every one who came to Korčula, irrelevant of the way of coming. Some-*

*times I make a joke, because my ancestors also came here, that some people came on a raft, some came with a ship condura Croatica [type of early-medieval ship or vessel very common in the Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>48</sup>], some on a galleon [a type of ship with peddles and sails that was in use from 10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>48</sup>], or on liburna [type of vessel named after the ancient tribe Liburni who used it; Romans also used this type of ship<sup>48</sup>], some came by modern ferry, some maybe swimmmed etc... But I believe that everybody who stayed here and wanted to live here and accepted the way of life can be a Korčulanin. I say, all of us somehow and in previous time came here.*

R: *What would then be the key sign? How could I become a Korčulanka?*

X: *Well, I think that for becoming a Korčulan you should love this town, accept the way of life and live in this town. Do not feel a stranger here, try to fit in. Maybe it is not so easy because we are quite closed community and not eagerly accept strangers.* (Male interlocutor from Korčula town)

### Situational Nature of Nested Identities

The variety of expressions of the identity, depending on the situation and context (in front of whom and where it is to be expressed), is best confirmed by the fact that many interlocutors in certain situations, although they feel the local identity is the most important one for them, »put« at the first place national or regional identity. They do this, usually, for some pragmatic reasons, because the majority (but not all) of interlocutors believes their settlement is not known everywhere in Croatia, or abroad.

*Dear God, when abroad I will prefer to say that I am from Croatia.* (Male interlocutor from Korčula)

Asked how they would introduce themselves to somebody from Zagreb, majority of interlocutors provided the following pattern: »From... (and then name of the settlement)«. »From Luka«, »From Blato«, »From Korčula«, »From Pupnat«. As the town and the island share the same name – Korčula – some of interlocutors would emphasize they mean the town, not the island »Not from the island of Korčula, but from the town of Korčula«. (In the Croatian language the distinct is emphasized by usage of preposition). Or they would emphasize to origin from the island of Korčula and not the town:

*Korčulani is the name for people from the town of Korčula, it means the people from the town of Korčula... I would always say that I am from the island of Korčula... and never: I am from the town of Korčula... From the island of Korčula... Because there is a great difference.. Are you from the island of Korčula? Then follows the question from which settlement, ...(...)... If you are asked: Are you Korčulanka? No! I am not, definitely. I am from the island of Korčula!... I am Blajka (from the settlement Blato)...(laughter).* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

Some interlocutors accentuate that quite frequently their identification »from (the island of) Korčula« had been misunderstood as if they were citizens of the town Korčula, and therefore they feel the need to additionally explain their local identity:

*Well, no. As I remember I was introducing myself as a person from the (island) of Korčula. But it was regularly misunderstood as from the (town) of Korčula. Well, and if I caught that the prepositions were mixed, I would start with an explanation.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

In some cases interlocutors simplified their identification, mentioning only the island but not a settlement, mainly because they wanted to simplify the explanation. They believed their collocutors wouldn't be acquainted with settlements on the island, supposing, but would with the island.

*From the island of Korčula. From the island of Korčula, because: »From Lumbarda« would be, I suppose, too much for them...* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

*From the island of Korčula, I never used to say from Blato...(...). Never, because there is a settlement Blato on the river of Cetina, and here is also the settlement Blato... Yeah, this is Blato on the island of Korčula. But I know majority tell that we are from the island of Korčula.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

Some interlocutors would, in order to avoid misunderstanding between island and the town, use both identifications (from certain locality and from the island):

*I would say I am from Blato on the island of Korčula. You have to say on the island of Korčula or they wouldn't know.* (Female interlocutor from Blato)

*From Smokvica on the island of Korčula...(...). Because, it has to be said Smokvica on the island of Korčula, because there are four settlements with the same name [in Croatia]...* (Female interlocutor from Smokvica)

*From Lumbarda...(...). Well, Ok, if someone would ask where it is I would, of course, explain that it is on the island of Korčula.* (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)

The previous quotation indicates the importance of local identifications, especially in cases of mutual antagonisms. The local antagonisms, manifested in numerous different ways, have been important for forming local, mutually differentiated identities<sup>47</sup> (i.e. for identification processes on so called horizontal level), but implementing this aspect of identification process on the island of Korčula is out of this paper's scope.

## Conclusion

The research results showed that identities of inhabitants of the island of Korčula are of the nested nature. Nevertheless, this research revealed that relation Brewer and Medrano and Gutierrez wrote about, is not one way road. The following quotation shows how the reverse direction of »nesting« identities is also possible – in that case the identity of the lower level includes the iden-

tity of the higher level, allowing the actors to »skip« (for whatever reason) the higher level of identity, because it is something that is self-evident:

*I would, of course it depends on who asks, I would say that I am Dalmatian. If I said I was Korčulanka, then one knowing Croatia would know Korčula is a part of Dalmatia and there would be no need to mention that I was Dalmatian.* (Female interlocutor from the Korčula town)

Majority of interlocutors included in this research consider themselves Europeans (belonging to the European milieu), especially because of »our« (inevitably high) culture and civilization (the frequent »argument« is belonging to the Mediterranean cultural circle, culture, tradition, but tourism too, and there are also symbols of this cultural circle – Marco Polo, Venice (the fact this region used to be under the Venice rule some interlocutors find to be an evidence of belonging to this civilization circle). It does not, however, diminish the importance of the national identity for them. Although this is something understandable majority of interlocutors would put their Croatian-ness on the top and mention it with proud. But, at the same time, this feeling of the national pride or belonging was not emphasized during the interview as anything special or typical for Croatia or extremely important.

The regional, Dalmatian identity is not suppressed by such attitude. Majority of interlocutors is aware that it is easy to manipulate by this regional identity for political purposes (and some remember vividly how it was done in practice); thereby they accentuate even more their Croatian identity. And the last but not the least, the local island identity is fragmented into numerous local identities. These local identities are very important to our interlocutors not only when they are not on the island, but while on the island as well. Since for the constructing of one's own identity the Other is always needed (and usually this is the neighboring Other)<sup>47</sup> the island of Korčula is, due to its geographical position, many local identification on rather small territory (276 km<sup>2</sup>), as well as to overall political situation in Croatia (recent processes of nation-state building, current processes of European integration) the ideal location for building several levels of identity.

Research showed that each level of identity (supranational, national, regional and local) of interlocutors taking part in this research has a particular importance and place in the hierarchical rank (vertical level); it also showed that each of interlocutors manipulates by expressing their »prime« identity, depending on the situation and context.

*If talking to a stranger first of all you have to tell him/her that you are from Croatia. But in Croatia I always tell that I am from Smokvica, on the island of Korčula, Dalmatia... (laugh)* (Male interlocutor from Smokvica)

Concerning expression of the feeling of belonging some of interlocutors in this research gave priority to the local community (great importance in this process is for sure given to antagonism, and frequently to competitive mutual relationship between settlements on the island of

Korčula), and some gave it to the national community. Reasons for such solutions can be very different. For some people priority of the Croatian national feeling is connected with the family history – members of some families had hard times during ex-Yugoslavia due to expressing their national identity, so they transferred these strong feelings to their descendants. The Croatian War of Independence and obtaining sovereignty definitively contributed to the new ways of expressing the national identity for those interlocutors. The others find expression of the national identity a kind of resistance to the regionalism, but there is the opposite reaction too – some people would express their regional belonging just because of national – regional tensions. However, majority of interlocutors emphasize their feeling of belonging to the national community as something that is self-understandable, as a patriotic act etc. The variety of different attitudes and approaches in expressing feelings of belonging, coexisting on the island of Korčula, is in accordance with Lawler premises about both proximal and distal rule<sup>30</sup>. Although Lawler cites possible reasons for any of choices, in this research I did not explicitly question inner motivation of such expression of feeling of belonging, which in its turn can be a possible issue of the future research. Statements of interlocutors, save some exceptions, prove that in case of identity of different levels, on the island of Korčula it is very often a combination of proximal and distal rules of choice giving priority to

any »level« of nested identities; it also proves the possibility of existing absolutely equal coexistence of national, regional and local identities. The importance and declarative emphasizing of any of these identities depends first of all on a situation or context, confirming thesis about the dynamic nature of identity<sup>21</sup>. Interlocutors themselves are aware of the complexity of this phenomenon, and from their way of expressing their own identity it is evident that they also perceive the coexistence of several kind of identities:

*From the island of Korčula, Lumbarda. This is my prime identity. (Female interlocutor from Lumbarda)*

*Concerning the pride of Croatian-ness, it exists; of course, it is completely the same as a part of identity. (Male interlocutor from Blato)*

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## **VIŠESTRUKI PROCESI IDENTIFIKACIJE NA OTOKU KORČULI (UGNIJEŽĐENI IDENTITETI)**

### **S A Ž E T A K**

Cilj ovog rada je ukazati na načine na koji se na otoku Korčuli odvijaju suvremeni procesi identifikacije. Promjena političke situacije 1990-tih godina, ali i suvremeni kontekst ulaska Republike Hrvatske u europske integracije pružio je lokalnim zajednicama otoka Korčule novi »poligon« za iskazivanje različitih identifikacija. U tim je procesima važno i pozicioniranje identiteta u odnosu na širi kontekst, bilo na tzv. vertikalnoj ili horizontalnoj razini. Istraživanje je provedeno u svim važnijim naseljima otoka Korčule uz upotrebu kvalitativne metodologije i etnografskog pristupa. Rezultati su ukazali na ugniježđenost identiteta (od nadnacionalnog (europskog) preko nacionalnog regionalnog do lokalnih međusobno diferenciranih identifikacija) na otoku Korčuli te na njihov situacijski i dinamičan karakter. Istraživanje je pokazalo kako su ugniježđeni identiteti međusobno kompatibilni te kako, u načelu, identiteti višeg reda (npr. regionalni) obuhvaćaju one nižeg reda (npr. lokalni), ali kako je moguća i obrnuta situacija (kada npr. lokalni identiteti podrazumijevaju regionalne). Pripadnici naizgled bliskih otočnih zajednica posjeduju izrazito diferencirane lokalne identitete, koji su često jednako važni, ako ne i važniji, od identiteta tzv. višeg reda, poput npr. regionalnog, nacionalnog i nadnacionalnog.