

The Croatian community in Australia in the early 21st century: a demographic and socio-cultural transition

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Summary

This article explores the processes of socio-cultural and demographic change and transition taking place in the Croatian community in Australia in the early 21st century. The 'Croatian community' is defined as all Croatian-born people in Australia and their offspring, as well as any other persons who speak Croatian or identify as Croatian in any other way. Three socio-cultural and demographic processes are identified: ageing of the community, return migration and the transfer of community activism from the first to subsequent migrant generations. All three processes are connected with a significant drop in the number of Croatian arrivals in Australia over the past several decades and the fact that the most numerous cohort of Croatian arrivals in the late 1960s is now reaching retirement age or even approaching life expectancy. Significantly, in the financial year 2003-04 the number of permanent departures exceeded the number of permanent arrivals. Return migration is analysed as mainly triggered by the retirement of the cohort that has always maintained a strong emotional connection with the homeland, but also with other processes involving younger people from the second and further generations considering longer stays in Croatia for business or educational purposes, as Croatia becomes increasingly attractive as an impending member of the EU. The article uses the Census and immigration data as a basis for the analysis.

Key words: *Croatians, Australia, community ageing, return migration, community activism, public representation*

Introduction

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the Croatian community in Australia is in a process of socio-cultural and demographic transition. For the purpose of this article, the Croatian community in Australia is defined as all Croatian-born people in

Australia and their offspring, as well as any other persons who speak Croatian or identify as Croatian in any other way.¹

This article analyses three socio-cultural and demographic processes: one, ageing of the community; two, return migration (since 2003, for the first time in history of Australian Croats, return migration numbers start to exceed permanent arrivals from Croatia to Australia); three, the increasing numerical domination of the second and subsequent generations over the first-generation migrants and a consequent transfer of community activism and its 'public representation' to the second generation. The third demographic and socio-cultural process is a consequence of the first two and is gradually changing the internal structure of the community from a typical 'working class' community (Jupp 1998)², as it was until 1980s, to a community that increasingly matches the educational and occupational structure of the Australian society as whole. Namely, many Australian Croats – members of the second and subsequent generations – joined by recently (since mid-1980s) arrived Croatian immigrant professionals – are nowadays part of the growing Australian 'multicultural middle class'.³

Table 1. Size, median age and income of the Croatia-born compared to larger population categories.

	Size	med. age	med. income
Total Aus pop	20m	37.1	466
Australia-born	14 m	32.8	488
O/seas-born	5.5 m	46.8	431
Croatia-born	51,000	57.2	307

Source: 2006 Census.

1. Ageing of the Croatian community in Australia

The Croatian community in Australia is rapidly ageing. In the 2006 Australian Census the 'Croatia-born' (51,000 people) had median age of over 57 years—compared to the total Australian population's median age of just over 37 years (see Table 1). When all people who identified as having Croatian ancestry⁴ (the ancestry question was asked for the first time in the 1986 Australian Census and then again in 1996, 2001 and 2006

¹ The emphasis on ethnicity homogenises and potentially stereotypes Croats in Australia, defining them simply through the country of origin. The 'community' has never been homogeneous and its internal diversity keeps increasing through social mobility of the Australia-born generations, diverse consecutive waves and mixed marriages.

² In the 2006 census, only 6.5 per cent of the Croatia-born had a 'degree and higher' education (see Table 3). See income statistics in Table 1.

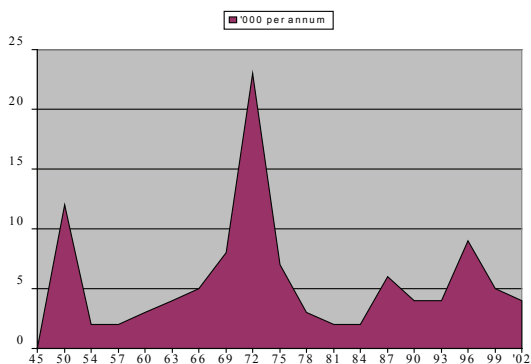
³ Since the mid-1980s onwards, multicultural middle class (MMC) formed from two sources: first, the second generation of non-English-speaking background (NESB), especially southern and eastern Europeans, who experienced considerable upward social mobility and second, a sizeable highly-skilled immigration, especially from Asia, but also from other NES source countries. These two groups have an increasing presence and visibility in business, professions, universities, media and government (for a more detailed analysis of MMC see Colic-Peisker 2009).

⁴ Numbers of the second and subsequent generations can be roughly calculated by detracting those of Croatian ancestry who are also Croatia-born from the total of people with Croatian ancestry. Using this method brings us to 54,000 people who could be considered second and further generation Croats. 118,000 people declared to have Croatian ancestry in the 2006 Australian Census. Horn (1993) rightly calls into question the validity and precision of the census question on ancestry, but this paper is not in a position to engage with this debate.

censuses) are taken into account—just over twice the ‘Croatia-born’ at 118,000 persons—that is, when the second and subsequent generation Croatians are counted, the median age of course goes down somewhat, but it is still likely to be considerably higher than the total population. This is due to at least two demographic factors: immigration from Croatia has slowed considerably since the mid-1990s and dropped dramatically after the turn of the century (see Figures 1 and 2). In addition, the fertility of the Croatia-born in Australia is low, following a Croatian rather than an Australian pattern. The majority of those who arrived since the 1980s have acquired professional qualifications and relevant work experience in Croatia in order to pass the points test for the Australian permanent visa, which means that they typically migrated in their late 20s and even more often in their 30s—towards the end of the peak of their reproductive age. This means that most, if not all of their children were born before migrating to Australia and thus of course their fertility conforms to Croatian fertility rate (one if the lowest in Europe at 1.4 children per woman, see CIA 2009). In the families of the second-generation Croatians in Australia the fertility is likely to switch to Australian, somewhat higher values (1.8 children per woman).

The age distribution of the Croatia-born at 2006 Census shows only 1.4 per cent were aged 0-14 years and 5.6 per cent were aged 15-24 years (DIAC 2009). The largest wave of Croatian immigrants arrived in the 1960s and most of these people have reached retirement age, which bears heavily on the community’s age profile. For example, at the time of the 2006 Census, 31.9 per cent of the Croatia-born were aged 65 and over (DIAC 2009). This means that the community mortality rate will peak within the next decade, with little immigration from Croatia to replenish the community numbers.

Until the 1996 Census, Croatians in Australia were counted among the ‘Yugoslavia-born’. The number of the Yugoslav-born rose constantly through consecutive censuses. The Australian Yugoslavia-born population quadrupled from 5870 in 1947 to 22 860 in 1954 through the intake of the so called ‘Displaced Persons’, a significant number of whom were Croatian speakers (DIAC 2009). The Yugoslavia-born (including Croatians) intake continued to increase through the next two decades, with the peak immigration achieved in 1969-1970 (Figure 1). Between 1961 and 1976 almost 100,000 Yugoslavia-born people migrated to Australia, many of whom were Croatians. The Yugoslavia-born population reached 129,620 by the 1971 Census and 160,480 by the 1991 Census (DIAC 2009). Due to the Yugoslav economic and political crisis in the 1980s and conflicts during the first half of the 1990s, immigration from the ex-Yugoslavia was continuous. Almost 30,000 settlers from the republics of the former Yugoslavia have migrated to Australia since 1991. Among them were many war refugees; those from Croatia were not numerous, but many ethnic Croatians fled Bosnia-Herzegovina and other ex-Yugoslav successor states.

Figure 1. Immigration from ex-Yugoslavia to Australia 1945-2002

A large majority of 81.9 per cent of the Croatia-born people in Australia immigrated before 1996. Among the total Croatia-born in Australia at the 2006 Census, 9.7 per cent arrived between 1996 and 2001 and 5.1 per cent arrived since the 2001 Census. Therefore, there is a clear trend of diminishing immigration from Croatia, which impacts upon the rejuvenation of the community, in demographic as well as in socio-cultural sense.

The 1996 Census counted 47,000 Croatia-born persons in Australia.⁵ There were 51,860 Croatia-born people in Australia at the 2001 Census, making up 1.3 per cent of the overseas-born population. In the 2006, the number of Croatia-born decreased to just under 51,000 (DIAC 2009). In the last Census 33,012 Croatian-born Australians (65%) spoke Croatian at home and the total persons who spoke Croatian at home was 69,900. It is significant that more than a half of the Croatian speakers were therefore members of the second and subsequent generations.

2. Return migration

The second socio-demographic process that can be identified among Croatians in Australia at the current time is return migration. Since 2003, for the first time in history of Australian Croatians, return migration numbers start to exceed permanent arrivals from Croatia to Australia (see Table 2 and Figure 2).⁶

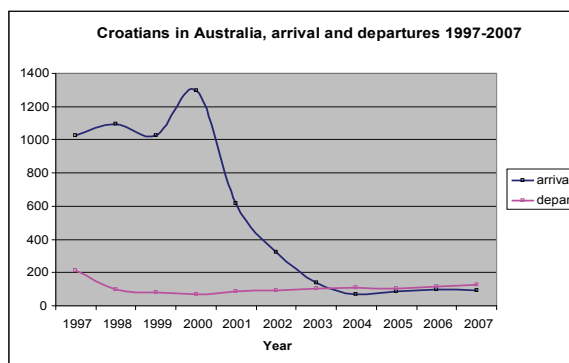
Table 2. Permanent arrivals from Croatia to Australia and departures from Australia to Croatia 1997-2008

FIN YR.	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08
Arr.	1024	1097	1026	1296	616	321	137	67	89	99	94
Dep.	212	100	80	72	86	95	102	110	102	118	129

⁵ It is assumed that many Croatia-born stated they were 'Yugoslavia-born'. In the 1996 Census 66,700 people said they spoke Croatian at home.

⁶ Australian immigration authorities keep detailed records of incoming and outgoing passengers and the nature of their moves (duration of stay overseas or in Australia and the purpose of stay, such as holiday, work and visiting family).

Figure 2. Permanent arrivals from Croatia and departures to Croatia 1997-2007



Source: DIAC 2007

In the past, the rate of return migration to Croatia was relatively low. At the turn of the century, Croatian Australians have an exceptionally low rate of return migration to Croatia. In December 2001, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs estimated that there were 1,000 Australian citizens resident in Croatia, mainly in Zagreb (Southern Cross Group 2001). Given that Australian citizens are not likely to live in Croatia unless they are of Croatian origin, and the very high uptake of Australian citizenship among the Croatia-born (96.7 %, 2006 Census), this number is likely to comprise a high majority of Croatia-born people or people with Croatian ancestry.

As far as the largest immigration wave to date is concerned (1950s-1970s), many of these people arrived in Australia with a temporary migration in mind but ended up staying permanently or at least long-term (Colic-Peisker 2008). This early post-war cohort mainly comprised low-skilled people from rural backgrounds for whom Australia was not a 'land of milk and honey'. Many hoped they could amass substantial means in several years and then triumphantly return to their native villages with their material standard of living and future prospects considerably enhanced. Instead, they worked hard for a number of years before they could buy a car and a house, let alone pay off the house fully. Under the circumstances, a long-term stay in Australia proved the only realistic option, with even a short visit to Croatia being a major expenditure which many could not afford for decades (Colic-Peisker 2006; 2008). The typical pattern for this working-class wave was as follows: young males (some teenagers) migrated through the 'chain migration' pattern, planning to stay temporarily and were at first heavily homeland-oriented, sending remittances to their families; in the second stage they prolonged their stay mainly for economic reasons and developed strong ethnic networks in Australia; in the third stage, they often sought a spouse from their homeland, or, if already married, brought the wife or family to Australia, which re-oriented them towards permanent settlement (they bought a house, their children were born in Australia); in the fourth stage they took citizenship and decided to stay. This pattern applied to many other migrant groups, especially the large southern-European intake of economic migrants 1946-1973, who had similar socio-economic backgrounds (see Castles and Miller 2003:30-32). These migrants tended to

have tightly-knit ethnic communities and they residential concentrated in all major cities. According to Markus et al. (2009:83) residential concentration of Croatians has been comparatively low compared to some other ethnic groups.

Often, working-class Croatians planned to return to their homeland in retirement (Colic-Peisker 2008). Nowadays, many indeed started realising this plan. However, children and grandchildren born in Australia are a retention factor. Those who can afford work around this difficulty by living bi-locally, part of the year in Croatia and part in Australia. Although the available data is not precise enough, it is safe to assume that the current growing permanent departures to Croatia are mainly due to the largest Croatian immigrant cohort reaching retirement age. A minority of younger people returning may be attracted by the economic recovery after the war in the 1990s and the tourism, projected to be the main Croatian industry, booming again - as many Australian Croatians are from coastal areas most attractive to tourists. Some people are also attracted by Croatia's imminent EU membership, currently scheduled for 2011. However, although Croatia is first in the queue for the accession into the EU (at this stage already much delayed), it is plagued by persistent economic problems (especially a stubbornly high unemployment of about 14%, down from over 20% in the 1990s) and high foreign debt. Croatia is also struggling to meet some of the conditions of entry spelled out in 31 Chapters of *Acquis communautaire*. For example, at the corruption perception index Croatia current holds rank 62 out of 180 (in comparison, Australia is at rank 9 and Bulgaria, already an EU member, at 72). In addition, following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, there are protracted maritime border disputes with neighbouring Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, also delaying the accession.

For Croatia born and bred retirees, however, returning to Croatia, which has a GDP per capita of US\$18,300 (compared to Australian US\$38,000), may represent a good economic option, and not just a fulfilment of long-standing nostalgic desire to reconnect with the homeland. Return migration scholars classify the first generation return as 'ethnic' and the return of the second and subsequent generations as the 'ancestral' or 'roots' returns. While denoting the factual, this classification does not say anything about a multitude of real-life pragmatic motives that drive people towards the return migration. Motivations for return vary along the continuum from emotions-driven nostalgic return to the pragmatic interest-driven return perhaps more likely to be found in the second and subsequent generations without significant memories of the 'ancestral land'. From the perspective of the Croatian state, the types of contributions that different generations of returnees may make to Croatian society are considerably different.

The 'myth of return' (Safran 1991) has certainly been nurtured in Croatian-Australian diasporic communities of the working-class migrant cohort and the 'ideology of return' may be reinforced by homeland institutions pulling the 'heartstrings and purse strings' of people in diaspora (Tölölyan 1996:19). A powerful pull of the homeland was demonstrated among the Croatians in Australia during the Croatian War for Independence 1991-95. Australian Croatians demanded that Australian authorities recognize Croatian independence from Yugoslavia, they contributed considerable funds to supporting

Croatia through the war effort and did not spare charitable efforts to help the victims of war and refugees.

Croatia has one of the largest diasporas relative to the population size in the homeland. It is estimated that about 2.6 million people emigrated during the 20th century. Due to the long-established Croatian tradition of emigration there exists not only a large first migrant generation, but also second, third and subsequent generations of people of Croatian ancestry in many European and overseas countries. Australia included. Having emigrated for various motives and having settled in countries with different and changing immigration and incorporation policies (e.g. Australia with its emphasis on permanent settlement and multiculturalism), heterogeneous Croatian diaspora groups nurture many different kinds of relationships with the homeland (Colic-Peisker 2008). Among Australian Croatians, such transnationalism comes in different guises. For example, the largest working-class cohort, due to suffering a language barrier and having low-skilled jobs, tends to nurture a more nostalgic view of the homeland and a possibility of return than middle-class professionals (Colic-Peisker 2006). Of course, many intersecting factors at work in the homeland, the host society and diaspora groups themselves influence transnational social processes, including those of return migration. In addition, the transnational perspective on migration, reflecting the era of globalization, considers migration and return as parts of a multi-stage ongoing process which often includes multiple movements (Čapo Žmegač 2006). Today's exceptional global connectedness and relative affordability of the long-distance travel leads to the emergence of new categories: 're-emigrants' and those who choose to live bi-locally.

The creation of an independent Croatia marks an important turning point in the homeland-diaspora relationship as the new state encourages return migration.

There have been some smaller-scale Croatian governmental return-assistance programs, which may have influenced the decision to return and later sustain the commitment to remain in Croatia – e.g. among scientists, professionals, entrepreneurs, investors and returnees now holding high-level positions in the public sector. Returnees are an important human resource for the homeland as it strives to establish itself among the European family of nations and not just 'slouch towards respectability' (Gallagher 2005:182).

Younger returnees from Australia are likely to possess professional and occupational skills that they can use in their employment or business ventures in Croatia or share on an informal basis; many, including retirees, also bring with them capital to invest in real estate or businesses. Alongside a small number of business entrepreneurs and investors, a majority of current Australian returnees are likely to be 'ordinary' returnees, such as retirees and a smaller number of younger families with dependent children. Without necessarily possessing outstanding human or financial capital, they are nonetheless likely to transfer their foreign wealth and/or income and become significant consumers of Croatian goods and services (especially real estate, medical services and aged care services). In some cases such returnees may be employees in Croatian

firms where they contribute their skills and insights gained during their life abroad. This makes returnees the bearers of cultural capital acquired in different Australian contexts – e.g. scientific, academic, professional, corporate and civic subcultures – that may be successfully applied in the Croatian context. For example, younger Australian returnees are likely to possess high-level proficiency in English, the main world language. It may be worth mentioning a growing category of ‘virtual’ returnees, connected to their homeland through internet-based networks—which may encourage the ‘real’ return.

The size and composition of return migration since the early 1990s remain unclear due to a lack of systematic record keeping, demographic tracking and research in Croatia (see e.g. Šakić et al. 1998; Čapo Žmegač 2005; 2007). Winland (2007) argues that the consequence of this gap in knowledge may be negative stereotyping, political manipulation or indifference towards returnees. Their reception within the homeland population and institutions, and outcomes – demographic, economic and cultural – of their return for Croatian society is an interesting area of further research. Such research should explore how processes of ‘transplantation’ and investment of financial, human and cultural capital unfold following return to the homeland, positioning returnees and business and cultural entrepreneurs as ‘actors of change’ (Cassarino 2004). In its current stage of development and in the process of accession to the EU, Croatia is potentially more attractive for returnees but also in need of additional human and financial capital. Migrant return could partly compensate for the high brain-drain Croatia experienced during the 1980s-1990s. It is also important to attract financial capital that can boost employment, economic growth and rise in GDP per capita thus helping Croatia to catch up with the EU levels. And lastly, returns can contribute to reversing a trend of depopulation in Croatia that has resulted from decades of emigration and one of the lowest birthrates in Europe.

3. Generational transfer of community activism

The third socio-demographic process affecting Croatian community in Australia in the 21st century is the transfer of the community activism and therefore also of the community’s ‘public representation’ to the second and subsequent migrant generations. Because of the dwindling immigration numbers, the second and further generation Croatians in Australia started to numerically exceed the Croatia-born. In addition to that, at least one-third of the Croatia-born have reached retirement age and a further half of Croatia-born are over 45 years old. Such age structure logically leads to the ageing first generation passing much of the community leadership and activism to the younger, Australian-born generations. The latter are also much better educated than the previous Croatia-born cohort of their parents. This is not only the case with Croatians but also with socio-economically comparable southern European groups (see Table 3).

Table 3. Southern Europeans, first and second generation: university education (persons aged 15+)

Ancestry	2 nd gen (estimate)		degree and higher	
			2 nd gen	1 st gen
Italian	601,000	17%	4.5%	
Greek	233,000	23%	4.5%	
Croatian	65,000	22%	6.5%	

Source: 2006 Australian Census (Community Information Summary at www.immi.gov.au)
 1st generation=Croatia-born; 2nd generation=all Australia-born people of Croatian ancestry

The relatively recent arrivals from Croatia, since the 1980s mainly skilled and professional people, are fewer in numbers and less active in the ‘ethnic community’ (Colic-Peisker 2002; 2008). The second and third generation Croatians are as a rule successfully integrated in the mainstream Australia and many of them experienced significant social mobility from their working-class parents. Together with recent cohort of professional arrivals from Croatia, they represent a Croatian contribution to the growing Australian multicultural middle class. A number of people within the second and subsequent migrant generation are clearly motivated to sustain a Croatian community presence in Australia, and while doing that, they may be engaged, deliberately or by default, in changing its image.

What does the public engagement of the second and subsequent generation Croatians in Australia mean for the community image and its public representation? It is likely that the community is gradually becoming more and more ‘mainstream’ and appears less and less ‘ethnic’. In other words, the form as well as content of the Croatian community activism, creativity and public representation will increasingly become something that the mainstream Australian public can access and appreciate. Increasingly, most of it is presented in English, or bilingually. Unlike much of the older first generation immigrants, their children and grandchildren are fluent in English, and although many also speak Croatian, English is their first language, as they have been educated in Australia. Different communication channels are used as well: just as in the mainstream society, internet gradually starts to predominate over other media, especially the much slower print media, the same is happening within the ethnic community (see Figure 3).

Such trends are illustrated by the most prominent and elaborate of the current Croatian-Australian community websites: the Sydney Croatian Youth website (<http://www.scy.com.au>) which was, judging by its internet archive, first created in 2004. Advertisements inviting the viewers to ‘Learn Croatian’ are prominent on the homepage,⁷ but the website is nearly fully in English—thus clearly bypassing the most numerous, now elderly, group of Croatian Australians, for whom internet communication in English may be somewhat of an alien concept. The website seems ‘alive’ and regularly updated. It is linked with other ‘ethnic’ media; Croatian-Australian newspapers, local (Sydney) radio-program and Croatian television (from Croatia proper). The most prominent feature on the home page is an advertisement for a Croatian business, which is likely to be

⁷ Croatian language maintenance and learning are becoming increasingly attractive because of prospects of Croatia joining EU, thus becoming a more attractive return as well as citizenship country. However, it is increasingly harder to be able to learn Croatian in Australia in a formal setting.

the websites sponsor (Figure 3). There is also a call for new team members (Figure 4). Among all things Croatian there are 14 culinary recipes listed in a weblink, *sarma* (meat mince and rice mixture wrapped in sauerkraut leaves and cooked at slow heat) having achieved most hits, but there are some eclectic recipes that definitely depart from the traditional Croatians cuisine, such as ‘sesame chicken’: a small but perhaps a telling point of ‘mainstreaming’.

Figure 3. Advertisement at the home page of the Sydney Croatian Youth website

The advertisement is a vertical poster with a dark background. At the top left, there is a logo for 'SYDNEY CROATIAN YOUTH' featuring a red and white checkered pattern and the letters 'S', 'C', and 'Y'. Below the logo, a woman in a striped sailor shirt and white hat is smiling and adjusting her hat. To her right, a man in a dark sailor uniform and white hat stands with his arms crossed. The background shows a bridge at night. The main text is in large, bold, red and white fonts: 'MORNARI + MORNARICE HARBOUR CRUISE FRIDAY 12 FEB'. Below this, it says 'FEAT. ZAKON + DJ DRENO METAR'. Further down, in smaller white text, it reads 'LADY ROSE, KING ST WHARF & DARLING HARBOUR', 'Food On Board - Departs 7pm', and 'Tickets \$30 scy-members | \$35 non-members'. At the bottom, it lists contact numbers: 'KETI: 0412 042 606 OR DIANA: 0432 639 122' and 'Tickets are pre-sold ONLY'. The bottom of the poster has a blue background with white text: 'SPONSORED BY JOE BANOVAČ & BOKA WINDOWS' and '18+ EVENT ID ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT RESERVES RIGHTS TO REFUSE ENTRY'.

Source: www.scy.com.au

Clearly, as soon as 'Croatianness' is performed in English, it inevitably acquires a quality of 'hybridity'; such a cross-fertilisation is arguably a good thing in a multicultural society. A living culture – one out in the street or on the internet—can never stay 'pure', in an ethnic or any other sense, especially in an urban multicultural environment. It is instead a living and developing set of narratives and practices. While mixed and hybridised with Anglo-Australian as well as other 'cultures' present in the multi-cultural space of Australia, all things Croatian also seep outside the Croatian community media and cultural space and get presence in the wider cultural space. In the process, the boundaries of the community become more porous, demographically – through intermarriage but also through cross-cultural communication at work, friendships, etc. – and culturally.

The Sydney Croatian Youth website uses an interesting metaphor – a type of website's logo – for the rejuvenation of the community and its cultural and other public activism: 'Nova loza raste' (New vine grows). In a way, this is a very Croatian logo: moreover, it is reminiscent of the main traditional Dalmatian industry—vine growing and winemaking—and also in tune with the Croatian-Australian 'pioneers', the early arrivals, back in 19th century. Those early Croatian immigrants to Australia were mainly Dalmatian peasants and vine growers, some of them forced into emigration by a grapevine disease, phylloxera. In addition, the still largest group of Croatians in Australia are rural Dalmatians who arrived in the period 1950s-1970s.

Figure 4. Website advertisement for Croatian youth activism—looking for new team members.



Source: www.scy.com.au

A link from the Sydney Croatian Youth website leads to a local Croatian Radio programs, one of a 'youth' and another of a 'grown-up' orientation. Both are broadcast from the Multicultural Community Radio Association Limited (MCRA LTD) in Sydney, at local 98.5FM. The mainstream 'Cro2000Radio' operates since 1992 (Croatian Community Radio, see http://www.2000fm.com/croatia_a/index.htm) and is on air two hours a week, Thursdays and Fridays 7-8 pm. The youth program is broadcast one hour a week, Mondays 9-10am (see <http://www.2000fm.com/croatia/index.htm>). The young team's mission statement on the website is as follows: 'All of our broadcasters are young Australian Croatians involved in the community and love their country of birth and their parent's country of birth', with pictures, full identity details and contacts of the team. This resembles an Australian 'open' style and strikes as different from the 'closed community' style of clubs and older media (which were all in Croatian), epitomised in clubs which had (and some still have) a 'Members only' sign at their doors. My attempts to get in touch with the presenters of the Croatian Radio and gain more information about their work by sending an email query to the supplied email address did not bear fruit, however.

Another interesting link leading from Sydney Croatian Youth website is a well developed global 'Croatian dating site' (<http://www.croatiandating.com/>) presenting itself as 'bringing together Croatian singles from around the world'. This is another contemporary reinforcement of the idea of the 'world community of Croatians' or global diaspora, following the first one, the largely old-style patriotic *Hrvatski Svjetski Kongres* (Croatian World Congress) created during the 'homeland war'.

Those who see the preservation of their Croatian identity in Australia as important and engage with the ethnic community, its organisations and media, and take part in Croatian initiatives, are more publicly visible and through their activities they create a public image of the Croatian community. These days, as the large post-war (1950s-1970s) wave of Croatian immigrants reaches retirement age, the maintenance and transformation of the public image is a domain of the members of the second generation, a large number of whom are already middle-aged. It would be difficult to estimate what proportion of the second generation remains loyal to, and even passionate about, their Croatian identity. Such numbers can be easily exaggerated due to the occasional and uncalled-for public manifestations of Croatianness, as for example at 2009 'Australian Open' tennis tournament in Melbourne when a group of half dozen Croatian youth was asked to leave the high gallery from where they were chanting loudly; initial cheering in support of a Croatian player soon turned into anti-Serb slogans - although the tennis opponent was Argentinean. Such public displays of 'ethnic hatred' are a phenomenon that Australian media invariably pick up on and as a consequence they reinforced the 'old' public image of a fiercely nationalist and generally ideologically extremist community. Such an image is projected at an 'old style' nationalistic website, although using the new 'virtual' internet medium. The Website (www.bebo.com) declares an exclusive love for Croatia ('and no-one else') and instructs viewers about Sydney Croatia (a soccer club) fan chants (<http://www.bebo.com/Profile.jsp?MemberId=6799149002>, sighted 13 Jan 2010). A more favourable version of a stereotypical image of the Croatian community in Australia hinges on the sport prowess. Many well-known soccer, football and other Australian players are

of Croatian ancestry. The widely used Wikipedia, under the entry 'Croatian Australians', lists 48 notable Croatians, most of whom are soccer, football and rugby players (36 out of 48 people listed are sportsmen), but also includes one 'serial killer' and only five women. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian_Australian, sighted 13 Jan 2010).

Overall, it is clear that community activism is becoming increasingly virtual. Does this mean that the old style' face to face community life in ethnic and sport clubs is declining? This is hard to say, but there are indications that it is increasingly mainstream-oriented. For example, manifestations of Croatian identity tend to happen outside ethnic clubs and in the mainstream media: Croatian food week (in several State capitals, usually in well-known upmarket hotels; Croatian movie festival in Melbourne in November 2009 at the Australian Centre for Moving Image (ACMI), exhibitions of Croatian art, book launches etc. Clearly, the public image of the community and the content of the 'Croatian culture' – as displayed in public – has moved much beyond what it was only two decades ago, when it was mainly closed in ethnic clubs and other 'Croatian' venues, and limited to old country content (food, card games, soccer as the most popular Croatian sport etc.), while folklore dances in traditional costumes used to be the main point of public representation, usually at multicultural festivals. While folklore costumes and dances are welcome and valuable, it is good that the menu of 'Croatian culture' is getting more varied, more urban and contemporary, and no doubt more attractive to the mainstream Australian public.

Conclusion

This article engages in analysing three socio-cultural and demographic processes taking place in the Croatian community in Australia in the early 21st century: ageing of the community, return migration and the transfer of community activism from the first to subsequent migrant generations. All three processes are connected with a significant drop in the number of Croatian arrivals in Australia over the past several decades. The numbers have been dropping since the peak immigration in 1969-70, and a smaller peak reached in 1988-89 (Figure 1) could not reverse the declining trend leading to the enduring numerical domination of the 1960s arrivals. This cohort, however, is now on the decline and is being, in terms of community activism, succeeded by their children and grandchildren rather than by more recent immigrants from Croatia. The latter are not only much fewer in numbers, but as a general rule do not have a close engagement with the 'ethnic community' and do not residentially concentrate, which is a typical settlement pattern of skilled middle-class migrants proficient in English whose integration in the mainstream Australian community is much less problematic than the one of the previous migrant cohort. A great majority of the second and subsequent generations, the Australia-born offspring of the largest post-war wave, has also integrated in Australian mainstream and become largely 'invisible'.

This leads to an important meta-question: even if we take for granted that the cultural and organisational preservation of ethnic communities is to be encouraged in a (multicultural) society, we can ask to what degree it is likely to continue beyond

the point of migrants' need for it? In other words, once a great majority of migrants of specific background or 'ancestry' is successfully incorporated into the structures and cultural practices of the host society's majority, how likely are they to show keen interest in staying attached to their co-ethnics, this way maintaining the 'ethnic community' presence? Clearly, at the present moment the community momentum is still there, with the clubs and other venues and organisations (church, sport and folklore groups, language schools etc.) continuing their activities, but the future is likely to bring decline. Once the ethnicity of a person or even of a migrant group (defined by the country of birth of ancestry) becomes a voluntary, 'symbolic' ethnicity, as it happened with many groups of American 'white ethnics' the tight-knit community life is likely to atrophy (Gans 1979). In Croatian case, the future arrivals are likely to decrease in numbers even further and continue to be highly skilled – which means that not many first-generation immigrants will cling to the 'ethnic bubble' for emotional and practical support during settlement (Colic-Peisker 2008). Part of the second and further generations is likely to nurture their connection with the ancestral land, but that connection is bound to lose the immediacy it had for the generation of their Croatia-born parents or grandparents.

Is such a likely development regrettable? According to one type of multicultural orthodoxy, yes, it is, because it is a loss of cultural diversity; from the perspective of the Croatian state that could profit from migrants' attachment to homeland in multiple ways, also yes; but from the perspective of migrants themselves, and their offspring, loosening of the attachment to the ancestral land is not likely to represent a misfortune. A successful integration into mainstream Australia, or any other host country, may indeed weaken a Croatian identification and language maintenance, but it will benefit migrants in every other way. The 'Croatian connection' does not need to disappear and it is not likely to: instead, new ways of public representation and new ways of connecting with the ancestral homeland – business, travel, tourism, study, etc. – will be created to the benefit of both host – contributing to the mainstream urban Australian culture – and home countries, as well as migrants themselves.

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Appendix

Table 3. 'Old' and 'new' ethnic communities, the first generation: size, median age and income (individual, per week).

Italy-born	199,120	65.7	\$288
Greece-born	109,980	63.4	\$246
Croatia-born	51,000	57.2	\$307
China-born	206,590	39.3	\$242
India-born	147,110	35.5	\$543
Bangladesh-born	9,050	30.5	\$376

Source: 2006 Australian Census (Community Information Summary at www.immi.gov.au)

Table 3 compares Southern Europe-born communities arrived in large numbers in the post-war and now comprising ageing and fast-shrinking populations (all three groups

shrank since the 2001 Census) with newly arrived young Asian communities arrived mainly over the past two decades. Southern Europeans had a typical working-class profile and were significantly underrepresented among the tertiary-educated and among professionals and overrepresented in low-skilled occupations. Asian groups, on the other hand, mainly arrived through the skilled category and have very high education profile. Low income for some groups may be due to the considerable proportion of tertiary students among them. The second generation of Southern European ancestry has much higher educational structure than their parents, which indicates a considerable social mobility.

Hrvatska zajednica u Australiji na početku 21. stoljeća: socio-kulturalna i demografska tranzicija

Sažetak

Članak istražuje procese socio-kulturalnih i demografskih promjena i tranzicije u hrvatskoj zajednici u Australiji na početku 21. stoljeća. Pojam 'hrvatske zajednice' uključuje sve one koji su rođeni u Hrvatskoj a sada žive u Australiji, njihove potomke, kao i ostale osobe koje govore hrvatski ili se na kakav drukčiji način identificiraju kao Hrvati. Uočena su tri socio-kulturalna i demografska procesa: starenje zajednice, povratna migracija te generacijski prijelaz u aktivizmu unutar zajednice s prve iseljeničke generacije na sljedeće generacije. Sva tri spomenuta procesa povezana su sa znatnim opadanjem broja hrvatskih doseljenika u Australiju posljednjih nekoliko desetljeća te činjenicom da su pripadnici velikog vala doseljavanja iz šezdesetih godina 20. stoljeća sada već umirovljenici koji dostižu prosječnu životnu dob. Značajna je činjenica da je u financijskoj godini 2003./2004. broj konačnih odlazaka premašio broj konačnih dolazaka. Analiza povratne migracije pokazala je da je ona uzrokovana umirovljenjem pripadnika prve generacije iseljenika koji su oduvijek održavali jaku emocionalnu povezanost s domovinom, ali također i drugim procesima. Odnosi se to na mlade ljude druge i sljedećih generacija koji na dulje vrijeme odlaze u Hrvatsku radi obrazovanja i zaposlenja a zbog njezina približavanja Europskoj Uniji što je čini sve privlačnijom zemljom za život. Članak temelji analizu na podacima cenzusa o stanovništvu i iseljavanju.

Ključne riječi: *Hrvati, Australija, starenje zajednice, povratna migracija, društveni aktivizam, javna predodžba*