DANCING TRANSNATIONALLY: CROATIAN IMMIGRANTS IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

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This paper employs a transnational lens to explore traditional Croatian dance practices in Sydney, Australia. It looks first at individuals and their emotional ties with Croatia as expressed through participation in dance groups. Then, three strands of group activity are explored. Organisations provide structure for alliances between groups; pedagogical principles were brought from Croatia but have undergone modification for the Australian situation, and material exchanges across borders include costume purchase and financial remittances. The transnational framework produces a detailed analysis of dance in the Croatian community in Sydney.

Keywords: migration, transnationalism, diaspora, dance

In a world where trans-border mobility is accessible to an increasingly large portion of the global population, the study of dance in diasporic communities has augmented salience. When dance genres are relocated to new geographical locations, transformations with respect to both structure and function may be observed, as the heritage of the original locale mingles with the influences which emanate from the adopted context. In turn, these transformations are often reflective of the manifold social, political and cultural changes which are experienced by dance practitioners who have also become migrants.

This paper is about the dance practices which have been brought to Sydney, Australia, by the Croatian migrant community, and draws its theoretical analysis primarily from transnationalism. This construct had its origins in the field of migration studies, with the foundational work having been carried out by scholars such as Peggy Levitt (2001; 2009; 2016). Numerous definitions of "transnationalism" appear in the literature but for the purposes of this paper, I define transnationalism as "the extent to which a life is lived in two (or more) countries simultaneously – whether that be materially, socially, economically

or affectively" (Scully 2012: 196). The terms "transnational field" or "transnational space" are often used to describe the various spheres of activity in which individuals and groups may engage and these fields and spaces are "constantly reworked through migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in more than one context" (Levitt 2009: 1227). The notion of a "field" or "space" is useful because it serves as a reminder that transnationalism is a binary construct, with activities in both the place of origin and the place of settlement.

While the idea of connections with the former homeland is relatively straightforward for those who migrated, much attention has more recently been devoted to the increasing complexity of transnationalism amongst second and subsequent generations. Members of the second generation occupy a unique place in the immigrant experience; they must find a way to mediate between the experiences of their parents and their own lives (Bottomley 2002). Put another way, they "live as a product of both nations, as well as being potentially judged from without as a product of neither" (McAuliffe 2008: 65). As time goes on, the complexities of life for the second generation multiply; they are more susceptible to the various influences of their surroundings, including language, fashion and music. Thus, maintenance of traditional practices from the homeland of their forebears may become more difficult.

For scholars of diasporic dance and music, transnationalism facilitates analysis of the employment of those arts as means of "articulating, negotiating and defining discourses of identity" (Cimardi 2018: 95) and provides a framework for consideration of the modes of affiliation between homeland and diaspora. Indeed, "a transnational perspective is needed to understand not only the nature and development of the migratory flow of…people to Australia, but also the ongoing interactions of [immigrants] in Australia with families in [the former homeland] and elsewhere in the diaspora" (Sorce Keller and Barwick 2013: 3). Hui Wilcox, writing about Chinese dance in the United States, states that in "examining Chinese dance in transnational social spaces…culture and home are in fact socially constructed realities" and "dance plays an important role in their construction" (Wilcox 2011: 323). The study of dance in diaspora, then, exposes interactions between local practices and global patterns (Mollenhauer 2017).

The movement of musical styles from their place of origin is a topic of much interest that has benefited from localised analysis (Raschieri 2017). In particular, the global spread of dance and music from the Balkans region has been studied extensively (Burton 2014; Laušević 2007) and such research provides a useful counterpoint to the current study because they focus on diasporic locations and experiences outside of Australia. Diverse places in a diaspora require differential analysis because of the multiple localised idiosyncrasies which may mould the migration experience (Dunn and Ip 2008), and so this paper treats the context of Sydney as unique. Certainly, there are similarities of experience between all expatriate Croatians and their descendants, but the specificities which characterise each location serve to illustrate the heterogeneity of diasporic experience.

Ethnographic data were collected during doctoral fieldwork from 2014–2016, when I made regular visits to three Croatian dance groups in Sydney. The adults' ensemble *Vukovar* and the children's group *Cvijet*[1] perform dances from multiple regions of Croatia while the third group only performs a ritual chain sword dance, the *Kumpanjija*, which is indigenous to the village of Blato on the island of Korčula. During the fieldwork, I made extensive notes, took photographic and video footage, collected ephemera such as concert programs, and conducted personal interviews with dancers, musicians, teachers and parents. The research in the Croatian community was one part of a broader study of traditional dance in Sydney (Mollenhauer 2018). It was conducted well after the independence of Croatia and at the time of the fieldwork participants did not reference political affiliations in relation to their own lives or to the dances they performed. My role in the Croatian community was that of an outsider and thus, the etic perspective presented here represents my perceptions and analysis of the Croatian community's dance groups within the context of Sydney. However, I draw extensively from general studies of Croatian immigrants in Australia which have been undertaken by members of that community, because those authors understand most succinctly the Croatian nation, history and culture, the immigrant experience and the uniquely Australian context (Budak and Lalich 2008; Kosovich 2014; Lalich 2013; Šutalo 2004, 2010, 2014).

The paper commences with a brief overview of the migration history of the Croatian community in Sydney, followed by the presentation of research findings in two broad sections. First, the "micro-level of the individual dancer", followed by the "macro-level", which examines "organisations and institutions who can determine the predominant meanings of dance and regulate and control dance practice" (O'Connor 2013: 9). Considerations of both the experiences of individuals along with the praxes of groups and organisations provides a well-rounded description of the function of traditional Croatian dancing amongst the cohort of immigrants and their descendants. In the section about the individual, responses from participants from the *Kumpanjija* are included because the focus is on commonalities of experience in practising all forms of Croatian traditional dancing in Sydney. However, in the section about dance groups, the unique nature of the practice of the chain sword dance outside of Croatia would require considerable differential analysis, for which there is insufficient space in the paper, so only *Vukovar* and *Cvijet* are used as examples.

THE CROATIAN COMMUNITY, THE DANCE GROUPS AND THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Croatian immigrants first came to Australia, along with many others, in the mid nineteenth century when many came to seek their fortunes in the gold mines. At that time, the nation-

[1] The group's management committee requested that I assign a pseudonym to the group.

ality of people from Croatia may have been listed as "Italian" or even "Austrian", depending on the political situation during the period of migration (Kosovich 2014). After World War Two, many more came as displaced persons, seeking escape from the communist influence which had settled over their home region (Šutalo 2014). A second wave migrated in the 1960s as a result of both high unemployment levels in the Republic of Yugoslavia and the Australian government scheme to attract skilled workers from Europe to fill the labour shortage in Australia (Budak and Lalich 2008). However, many who came in these waves were recorded under the broader heading of "Yugoslavian." Croatia, in its current form as an independent nation, has existed only since 1991 when independence was declared and a third, much smaller wave, migrated then (Lalich 2013).

Settlement in Australia means a variety of important situational changes must be faced by all immigrants because they all become members of a minority group. Hence, they tend towards de-territorialisation, choosing to focus on the common identity, Croatian, rather than any sub-categories. Indeed, all of the sociological studies in Australia recognise that "Croatian" becomes a binding identity which supersedes any other affiliations (Budak and Lalich 2008; Kosovich 2014; Lalich 2013; Šutalo 2004, 2010, 2014). This phenomenon, in which people from multiple regions unite under a nationalistic taxonomy, has been identified in the context of various immigrant dance groups in the United States by Shay (2006) and in the Lebanese community in Australia (Tabar 2005).

Cvijet is one of around ten groups in Sydney where traditional Croatian dance is taught to children and teenagers; it is divided into four groups by age and my participants were aged 12–17 years. *Vukovar's* dancers range mostly from 18–35 years along with three members in their fifties. Both of these groups were founded by people who simply wished to continue and perpetuate their passion for Croatian dance in Sydney. The *kumpanjija* troupe was founded when the Dalmacija Sydney Croatian Club was built by emigrants from Blato; as it is a place-based ritual dance, they constructed a new "place" in suburban Sydney. Its performers are aged 16–30 but there are several older adults in governance roles. In all three groups, there is clearly defined leadership which has been selected and accepted by the rest of the group and all choreographic and performative decisions are made by those leaders. *Vukovar* and *Cvijet* perform dances from all over Croatia; for example, the program for *Vukovar's* thirtieth anniversary concert in 2014 included *Rukavice i todore* (Bizovac), *Zagorski bregi* (Zagorje), *Vrličko kolo* (Vrlika) and Čobanske *igre* (Hercegovina).

The memberships of all three groups are exclusively Croatian. Naturally, the members of the *kumpanjija* had familial connections with Blato; amongst the other dance groups there was a mixture of those from present-day Croatia with people from Bosnia and Herzegovina. General immigration research reveals that the Dalmatian coast between Split and Dubrovnik has been a major source of migrants to Australia, with another cluster coming from the Međimurje region (Šutalo 2004). During the fieldwork period no group performed outside of Croatian community events. This exclusivity highlights the unique

nature of the Australian context; there was no interaction in Sydney between the Croatian dance groups and the rest of the population. It also directly contrasts with the situation in the United States as described by Laušević (2007), in which there was much overlap between immigrants from the Balkans region and Balkan dance aficionados with no such ancestral ties.

In all, the study involved ninety-nine participants across the three groups, with forty-nine of those consenting to personal interviews. The focus of the research was on first and second generation immigrants. Ten interviewees are first-generation immigrants who migrated as children, accompanying their parents to Australia. However, all of this group had lived long enough in Croatia to have substantial concrete memories of life there. The remaining thirty-nine are second-generation settlers. Three of the respondents recounted tales of escape under duress on the part of their parents but the remainder, along with their parents, had migration experiences which were relatively comfortable, notwithstanding the gravity of the decision to pack up and settle permanently on the other side of the world. Most of the interview cohort (and/or their parents) came to Australia in the 1960s and 1970s; only two first-generation immigrants migrated as young adults in the early 1990s.

DANCE AND THE INDIVIDUAL: EMOTIONAL TRANSNATIONALISM

Individuals and diasporic collectives in Australia's multicultural society must negotiate their positions within both their cultural community and the broader population. Emotional connections or nostalgic reminiscences reconcile past and present, memories and plans, places and spaces. Skrbiš posits that "emotional content pervades transnational relationships" (2008: 232) and indeed, immigrants have been observed to specifically turn to various folkloric practices in order to enhance their affective recollection experiences (Levitt 2009). In this section the strength of personal emotive connections with Croatia, which are actualised through membership of a traditional dance group in Sydney, is explored.

Emotional links with the sending society are mediated by dance for members of both generations. The first generation immigrants in the study made comments such as:

> – there was a yearning to be involved with the culture and heritage of my Croatian background. (Damien*)[2]
>
> When someone asked "Why the hell are you still doing this?" I answered "Because I love it. Simple: it's in my blood". (Peter*)

[2] All individual participants have been assigned pseudonyms. The * following a pseudonym denotes a first generation immigrant; the remainder are second generation immigrants.

The remarks of the second generation were congruent and also concern the connections with Croatian heritage through participation in traditional dance groups:

> It means you can be with people from your culture; you can be with your culture and learn more about it – and you can go around and socialise with other groups, and see what they think about it as well. (Jack)

> We're not here to become professional folkloric dancers, we're here to be with Croatian people, meet new people, learn about our culture. (Hannah)

> I love learning about my culture, and the songs especially. (Megan)

Participants also expressed their desire to preserve the Croatian cultural traditions and to foster a love for Croatian folklore amongst members of subsequent generations:

> This is what we tell these parents: that if you want your children to socialise, and at least hear some of the culture, then this is it. (Stella)

> We should never forget our own backgrounds, where our parents have come from and so on. I suppose this is a way of cementing that within us and also teaching our own children in that respect, so they know what their own roots are. (Damien)

> That's what I say to my kids, "it's culture, you're learning culture, as well as the language" because through the songs they're learning the language as well. (Miriam)

> One night when I was dancing, everything became blurry, and through the dance I could see these three little girls holding hands and they were, like, looking at our feet and they were trying to copy our steps and I swear to you from the deepest part of my heart I heard God say "You see that? That's why you do it! You do it for the next generation". (Sandra)

Some participants felt that the practice of traditions such as dance is an expression of an aspect of Croatian culture which is personally advantageous for them:

> I think Australia's a pretty uncultured country, not surprisingly though because you were only formed in the 1700s. So that's why I like to come [to dancing] to practise my culture. (Henry)

> My kids are better kids for their involvement with Croatian folkloric dancing, and I think there's a lot of parents out there who recognise that. (Gary*)

> [The dancing] is something that's been kept here and implemented to keep a social aspect for the general youth here – to keep families knowing each other; to keep the general youth just being with one another, friends, circulating around those traditions and values. (David)

The additional importance of maintenance of traditions such as dance within the diasporic community was highlighted in the following comments:

> We in the diaspora, we wanted to keep and carry on, we felt we had to carry on the tradition. (Clare)

> I saw that the folkloric group is one of the best learning places about Croatia. (Michael)
>
> It's a commitment to heritage but also a commitment to keeping our community alive and keeping that culture alive. (Olivia)
>
> I still want [my children] to have instilled in them those traditions of their background, so that they know…where their grandparents are from. (Bronwyn)

Dancing is one channel through which familial pride may be engendered; many participants related their realisation that their dancing practices foster enjoyment amongst parents and grandparents:

> [My parents] are happy that I am doing [dancing] and keeping with the culture…I guess they are a little bit proud of me. (Joel)
>
> [My parents] are very proud of me to [dance] and to see that I've taken the heritage on board. (David)
>
> …my grandparents are proud of it, same as my Dad. (Andrew)
>
> It's kind of like, you know when you say that when your parents told you stories from overseas when they were little, it's kind of like they're watching you experience that, like not the whole thing but kind of like the culture side to it. (Brooke)

The pleasure of the first generation, as related by these participants, is understandable when the effort of that generation to establish Croatian community organisations and activities is taken into account:

> For my Mum, she's always tried to keep our Croatian heritage, like speaking Croatian at home…I guess to her, because she's born over there, she has that connection. We hang around Croatian people…that's important to her. (Matthew)
>
> We went to Croatian church, Croatian school, danced at Croatian groups, played football at Croatian clubs, went to the Croatian Club. (Scott).

Across the entire cohort of participants, employment of traditional dance as one means of constructing emotional connections with Croatia was present. The responses correlate with those of Croatian immigrants in traditional dance groups in Auckland, New Zealand, who also choose to dance as part of their identity construction and to perpetuate familiarity with their cultural background (Simon 2014). The immigrants in the current study are continually choosing to juxtapose their cultural heritage and their Australian way of living, so constructing an emotional transnational space through their dancing. Dance, then, is a channel through which participants can concurrently situate themselves within both the past and the present aspects of their lives (Finnegan 2003). The participants have chosen to live in Australia, yet they have also opted to assign an important role in their current lives in Sydney to traditional dance practices (Ram 2005). Put another way, they are enacting binary facets of belonging: "locating the idea of belonging between both 'being' and 'longing' draws out the complex connections with memory and nostalgia" (Bonnerjee 2013: 432).

For members of the first generation, dance activates individuals' memories of their youth in the former homeland (Krumhansl and Zupnick 2013), while for the second generation, dance acts as the "nostalgic touch-point" with the inheritance they have received from their parents (Maghbouleh 2010: 213). All participants in Sydney assign relevance to their cultural heritage practices, in spite of being active members of Australian society. There was also a sense of urgency in the perpetuation of traditional dancing amongst the children in their community and it is possible that this reaction results from the employment of traditional dancing in Croatia as a signifier of national identity (Shay 2016). The continued funding of the national ensemble, *LADO*, signifies its status of importance to the people of Croatia and hence the continuation of traditional dancing in the Croatian diaspora may be seen as a public expression of a sense of continued connection with Croatia (Simon 2014). Indicators of unique alterity, such as traditional dancing, are retained as a matter of community pride.

So, the personal affective connections with Croatia which are realised through traditional dancing have great meaning to those who dance and to their family members. The participants all attend school or pursue careers in Australia, yet they are determined that their heritage practices should be honoured in the Croatian community and perpetuated amongst subsequent generations. However, the personal transnational connections are only part of the story; they next section is complementary, describing the activities of dance groups.

DANCE AND THE GROUP: STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL TRANSNATIONAL FIELDS

Here, I discuss the various ways in which dance ensembles operate within three transnational fields. The first, organisational transnationalism, is about the culturally-specific associations, both general and dance-related, which have been established over time by Croatian immigrants in Sydney. Next, I look at pedagogical praxes, describing connections with Croatian with respect to teaching dance as well as the changes in pedagogy which have emerged over time as a result of influence from Australian society. Finally, material transnationalism concerns the exchange of goods and money across borders. The three are interrelated and operate in synchrony to facilitate the continuation of traditional Croatian dancing in Sydney.

ORGANISATIONAL NETWORKS

Organisational transnationalism concerns the intra-community societies and associations which are formed within immigrant groups. It is based on characteristics of the particular community in question and, therefore, may reflect culturally-specific religious or political

affiliations (Levitt 2001). Organisational fields provide the structural framework within which other forms of international cultural flows operate (Hassrick 2012), including the pedagogies and material goods which are discussed below. Organisations, therefore, provide the "infrastructure for cultural retention" (Dunn and Ip 2008: 91) within immigrant communities.

Croatian immigrants have made the establishment of cultural links with fellow settlers from Croatia a priority, so that a stable element would be constructed within the turbulence of migration and resettlement (Van Gorp and Smets 2015). Croatian Clubs were built so that members of the community could socialise with others from their former homeland. Clare related that many people, such as her parents, found it "very hard to come, which is why I think it meant so much to my parents' generation to build these Croatian clubs to keep that culture alive and it was their connection to the old country". The clubs and organisations served as places of refuge, where shared values and traditions, so honoured by first generation immigrants, were privileged (Lalich 2004; Simon 2014). The Croatian Catholic Church has also been a focal point for community activities. Indeed, 14 Catholic parishes or centres have been established around the nation over the past 60 years (Šutalo 2010). Both *Vukovar*[3] and *Cvijet* were actively involved in performing at church events; for example, *Vukovar* sang at the Croatian Church Christmas Carols in a local park in both 2014 and 2015. Thus, there is a close relationship between Croatian Catholicism and practitioners of traditional folklore in Sydney.

There are no formalised international links for dance groups in the Croatian diaspora, either with Croatia or with immigrant communities in other locations such as the USA. However, from the general community organisational structure, a dance-based network has arisen, which is stronger at local and national levels than within the international arena. Organisational links between dance groups within Sydney were established in 1978, with the formation of the Association of Croatian Folkloric Groups (Budak and Lalich 2008). I attended the Croatian Children's Folkloric Festival in Sydney (organised by this Association), where troupes from all over Australia would gather for an afternoon and evening of carnival rides, food and a concert with items by each group. *Vukovar* has links with similar groups in Melbourne and in Auckland, New Zealand which, while being informal in that there is no organisational structure connecting the groups, are strong in intensity. During the fieldwork period, performances were held in each of these three cities, with the three groups performing on every occasion in a show of support for the others. The national network amongst both the children's and adults' groups mirrors the network of festivals and competitions which takes place between various localised dance groups in Croatia itself (Shay 2016; Ćaleta and Zebec 2017). The establishment of dance and music societies to which various culturally-specific groups contributes to both choreological and community cohesiveness. However, their interconnectedness is more congruent with

[3] *Vukovar's* 30th anniversary concert, staged at a general performance venue rather than a Croatian Club, was the exception.

"intradiasporic transnationalism" (Lee 2011: 303) since it is not generated from Croatia itself but from the various nodes of Croatian expatriates around Australia.

PEDAGOGICAL PRAXES

There are specific links between teaching practices in both home and host societies. This section describes similarities of praxis and also examines any changes which have appeared in pedagogies since the establishment of the various dance groups in Sydney. Patterns of pedagogy which have been developed in KUDs[4] of Croatia have been reproduced in diasporic locations, including Sydney. The creator of *Vukovar* had learned his craft in Croatia, and had successfully auditioned for *LADO*, the national ensemble of Croatia, before deciding instead to migrate to Sydney:

> We were lucky that we had [the founder] who used to dance for *LADO*; we were instilled into that professionalism, originality of dance and stuff like that. (Terry*)

The current teachers of *Vukovar* and *Cvijet* have amassed considerable experience in both children's and adults' groups in Sydney, where their teaching and choreography skills were honed through the advice of their mentors. This situation is not unusual for amateur Croatian dance groups, as there are no requirements for formalised teaching qualifications for Croatian traditional dancing (Katarinčić, Niemčić and Zebec 2009). Sydney dancers have experienced direct input from Croatian experts. The eminent Croatian choreographer and dance researcher Dr Ivan Ivančan visited Sydney in 1991 and each group sent representatives (dancers as well as teachers) so that he could assess the standard of dancing in Australia. Teresa* recalled that

> [Dr. Ivančan] covered all the areas and showed different steps, then he'd go to different groups and have a look – and some people got him to do choreographies.

The current leaders of both *Vukovar* and *Cvijet* have each travelled to Croatia to participate in workshops which are organised by the Croatian Heritage Foundation, whose website shows that in August 2018, the focus was on dances from the Adriatic region of Croatia (Hrvatska matica iseljenika 2018). Last year, the new teacher (since my fieldwork phase) of *Cvijet* and two students were sponsored by the group to attend the seminar for that year. Opportunities for informal interactions with visiting musicians and dancers are sought whenever possible by the Sydney groups. In January 2017, Dr Joško Ćaleta from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb came to Sydney with a singing group, *Dalmatica*, which had been invited to perform for the general public in Sydney. The Committee Secretary of *Cvijet* organised a singing workshop for members of the two older age groups, during which Dr Ćaleta was able to concentrate on Croatian

[4] *Kulturno umjetničko društvo* or Cultural Artistic Society; the localised dance troupes around Croatia (Shay 2016).

language pronunciation and voice projection, in particular. These activities demonstrate the "increased mobility of cultural flows" (Hassrick 2012: 100) which has resulted from cheaper travel along with strong transnational personal and cultural networks.

An important area of interest in the pedagogical field is that there has been a departure, over the past two decades, from the teaching style employed in Croatia. Several members of *Vukovar* related that the early days of the group were characterised by a strictness which is no longer present:

> We were probably a lot stricter back in the day; when [the founder] taught, you'd be too afraid to put a foot wrong. (Rosemary)
>
> People were scared of [the founder] – when you didn't do something good, he let you know about it. (Scott)
>
> [The founder] comes from a full knowledge of folklore from LADO days and he was quite strict. (Molly)

The man, of whom these participants were speaking, was mirroring the style commonly used in Croatia. Ethnochoreologist Tvrtko Zebec[5] related in an interview with me that dance teachers in Croatia

> like to be accepted as artists by the members [of their troupes] so they are not only one of them, they have to be on a higher level – so if they say "it should be like that" everybody should follow and it is very rare that some of them are cooperative in that way, especially in these folk dance ensembles.

In contrast, the current leader of *Vukovar* chooses to be relaxed in demeanour and collaborative in his teaching methodologies, yet this approach appears to be highly successful. While it was clear during my visits that he had choreographed dances in a particular way and he instructed the dancers in the construction of that choreography, he sometimes sought his dancers' opinions, for example, which handhold was more comfortable for the dancers, or which pattern of motifs looked and felt the best, and he would then make spontaneous adjustments to his choreography in response to his dancers' suggestions.

This shift is likely to have resulted from the change in attitude of the second-generation immigrants, who make up the majority of dancers at *Vukovar*. Second generation immigrants have grown up in a more individualistic society and absorb the social configurations and systems (Levitt 2001). In Australia, democracy and personal choice are favoured, rather than autocracy (Zevallos 2008). Thus, a collaborative teaching style is a logical progression given the prevailing social context in Sydney, where the second generation dancers spend more time overall with the wider population than with the Croatian community.

An additional important change, common to both *Vukovar* and *Cvijet*, is the transition from Croatian to English as the teaching language. Indeed, the loss of bilingual ability is

[5] This interview took place during the 28th Symposium of the International Council for Traditional Music Study Group on Ethnochoreology, Korčula, Croatia, July 15, 2014.

a regular occurrence amongst second-generation immigrants (Jones-Correa 2002). In both cases, classes were formerly conducted completely in Croatian, but Clare told me it eventually became normative that "half the kids can't speak Croatian" so the use of English as the teaching language developed and became customary. As a result, it was considered to be too time-consuming for teachers to make their remarks in both languages. During fieldwork, I observed that the Croatian words *lijevo* (left) and *desna* (right), some technical terms for steps were employed, and Croatian songs were taught, but otherwise, the Croatian language appears to be gradually slipping out of the teaching methodology.

Accompanying the loss of language is the fading of direct engagement with Croatian folklore and history as part of the dance class, a situation which is similar to that noted in other traditional dance genres when taught in diasporic locations (Ram 2005). Crvenkovic (2005) recalls that at *Koleda's*[6] leaders followed the pattern of prominent groups in Croatia by providing contextual information such as geography, history, musicology and choreology in the form of a short lecture, before beginning to teach a new dance. Clare noted that in previous years,

> before the dance we all had to sit down and get a half an hour lesson – the map would come out: this is where the dance is from, give a brief history, the dress, how they dressed and other information such as "we don't have music in this dance because back in the day they were under the Turks, the Ottoman empire".

The dissemination of such information has now almost disappeared from dance lessons, most likely because the second generation lack the experiential memories of festivals and celebrations in the sending society (Wolf 2002), and such information may be considered to be of little relevance in their Australian-based lives.

MATERIAL EXCHANGES

Material transnationalism concerns various circuits through which either money or various kinds of merchandise cross national borders (Levitt 2001; Scully 2012). Here, it is mostly about the transfer of costumes between Croatia and dance groups in Australia. Costumes worn for performances provide symbolic links to the sending society and are important in establishing mnemonic connections with the location of origin through a dance performance (Nahachewsky 2012).

Vukovar has multiple sets of costumes in storage and they strive to present correct costuming for the region from which each dance in their repertoire originates, in consonance with folkloric groups in Croatia itself (Katarinčić, Niemčić and Zebec 2009). Many items have either been purchased by group members while visiting Croatia, or have been ordered and shipped to Sydney. For example, the elaborate headwear shown in Figure 1

[6] *Koleda*, formed in 1967, was the first Croatian ensemble in Sydney (Crvenkovic 2005). Some of the older members of *Vukovar* had previously danced with *Koleda*.

is purchased in Croatia because nobody can make these items in Sydney. Hence there are manufacturers in Croatia who service the material needs of the diasporic dancers (Gowricharn 2009).

Figure 1. Embroidered headdresses worn by *Vukovar* dancers at their 30th anniversary concert, November 1, 2014

Figure 2. A female member of *Vukovar* at the 30th anniversary concert, November 1, 2014

One of the female dancers in the group is responsible for coordinating costumes. She scours markets and shops in Sydney to find some items which, at least from a distance when the group is on stage, provide replication which is accurate enough to satisfy audience members. A final source of costumes comes from other groups in Australia. The costume worn by the female dancer pictured in Figure 2, was borrowed from a dance group in Melbourne. Thus, material networks, with a "lend and borrow" structure, are operating amongst the adult dance groups at "intradiasporic" levels in Australia (Lee 2011: 303).

Cvijet also has multiple costumes to match the regional distinctiveness of the dance being performed. However, while a few items have been purchased from Croatia, either in person or ordered electronically, most of their costumes are produced locally by the group's costume coordinator. The main reason for this is the trend, originating from parents, for the children to wear replica costumes, instead of the "little white dresses" which, said Camilla, children of the previous generation used to wear for their performances. So, the costume organisers feel that they need to provide outfits which will satisfy the parents but they do not have the resources to buy costumes from Croatia. The use of locally-sourced materials is a practice which is also noted amongst Croatian dance groups in the USA (Johnson 2009), and does not detract from the cultural significance of the performance, since the costume only needs to "*refer to,* or *symbolize* the imputed setting and the imputed identity of the dancers" (Nahachewsky 2012: 154).

Finally, there is a further form of material transnationalism operating within the Croatian community, which is not related to costuming requirements. Financial remittances are a common means through which emigrants living in a financially secure situation may provide assistance to more needy relatives who remain in the homeland (Carling and Hoelscher 2013). Levitt (2016) suggests that the global total of financial support sent to previous homelands by emigrants exceeds $US600 billion. Such remittances have been a specific hallmark of the Croatian diaspora, with the nation's emigrants being considered as providing a substantial contribution to the Croatian national budget (Winland 2006).

The Sydney dance groups have often played pivotal roles in fundraising events for various needs in the Croatian homeland. On such occasions, the dance groups form part of the program of entertainment, designed to attract as many patrons as possible. In 2016, both *Vukovar* and *Cvijet* performed at an event (Figure 3) which targeted a need in the town of Vukovar in Eastern Croatia. The water tower was severely damaged during the war in the 1990s and funds are still being sought to enable the repairs to be completed[7].

Dance groups, then, have been directly involved in transnational remittance-sending activities which are organised by the broader community of Croatian immigrants in Sydney. Carling and Hoelscher (2013) posit that economic integration into the receiving society is

[7] While the dance group has existed since 1984, it chose to rename itself after this town in the early 1990s, in honour of the significant battle which took place there.

the most important influence on fiscal transnationalism and this is often augmented in the second and subsequent generations, who often experience increasing monetary comfort over time (Jones-Correa 2002). The Croatian community has, on the whole, achieved economic security and this fundraising event demonstrates both the willingness of the community to support people in need in Croatia and the important function of the dance groups in these community-focused gatherings. Thus, material transnational activities do not always directly relate to the dancing but to the groups' position within the community of immigrants.

The three forms of transnationalism which have been described in this section are distinctive, yet in combination they serve to strengthen the ability of Croatian dance groups in Sydney to keep functioning. In turn, the ongoing existence of traditional Croatian dance in Sydney serves to remind the immigrant community members of their ancestral homeland. The individuals' emotional connections described in the first section provide motivation to participate in the group-level transnational fields. Simultaneously, the group activities strengthen the affective ties through concrete links with Croatia and the ability to better represent Croatian heritage through performances of traditional dance in Sydney.

Figure 3. Poster advertising fundraising event in the Croatian community[8]

[8] English translation of text: "Croatian Catholic Centres in NSW: St Nicholas, Our Lady of the Great Croatian Testament, St Anthony, St Joseph and Our Lady have organised a fundraiser for the reconstruction of the Vukovar Watertower. King Tomislav Croatian Club Saturday 27 August 2016. Ticket Price $25. "Plavi" (a musical ensemble) are playing." The lower part of the poster is not shown as it identifies *Cvijet* and gives personal information such as names and contact details.

CONCLUSION

The Croatian community in Sydney has established itself well in the host society of Australia, yet it continues to maintain a variety of transnational connections with the home country of Croatia. This paper has employed transnationalism to analyse the dance practices of Croatian Australian at both individual and group levels. Individually, those who participate in Croatian dance groups demonstrate strong affective ties with the former homeland which are expressed bodily through their adherence to dance groups. First generation immigrants worked hard to preserve Croatian cultural traditions, and the second generation dance participants articulated their affection for Croatia and the importance of continuing their heritage practices while simultaneously being active in all areas of Australian society.

As groups, the dance ensembles actively engage in transnational fields of organisation, pedagogy and material exchange. The political, cultural and religious associations which were established by first generation immigrants provided an operational framework for the dance groups in Sydney. Dance groups tend to form connections with groups in other diasporic locations. The pedagogical praxes in Sydney were established using the pattern of the KUDs in Croatia, but some changes have emerged over time due to influences from the broader Australian society. These include a more collaborative teaching style and the use of English rather than Croatian as the language for teaching. Material goods are purchased in Croatia for use in dance performances in Australia, so that the dancing more accurately represents the various regions of Croatia for audience members in Sydney. Dance groups also engage in fundraising activities, providing entertainment and encouraging attendees to contribute towards various projects in Croatia.

The paper has demonstrated the usefulness of transnationalism as a theoretical paradigm for analysis of traditional dancing in diasporic communities. The various strands of transnationalism employed in this paper (emotional, organisational, pedagogical and material) have combined to provide a nuanced description of the role of Croatian traditional dancing for participants living in Sydney, Australia. The participants in the study were only those with some form of connection to Croatian dancing in Sydney and so the findings of this paper, even in relation to emotional transnationalism, may not be generalizable to other Croatian immigrants in Sydney who do not dance. Findings from other nodes of the Croatian diaspora may also be different; it is likely that there could be other influences either elsewhere within Australia (Dunn and Ip 2008), or in other host societies such as the United States (Laušević 2007). The findings have contributed to understanding of the perpetuation of traditional Croatian dancing outside of Croatia and its significance in the lives of those who continue the practice far from the place of origin. Research about traditional dance practices amongst immigrant communities in Australia is also scant, so the paper makes a contribution to this small body of literature. However, its principle purpose has been to recount the experiences of Croatian immigrants and their dance practices in Sydney and to let their stories be recorded.

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TRANSNACIONALNI PLES: HRVATSKI IMIGRANTI U SIDNEYU U AUSTRALIJI

Istraživanje plesa u dijaspori teorijski se može osloniti na okvir transnacionalizma. U tom se okviru promatraju aktivnosti u matičnom društvu i u društvu domaćinu te se otkrivaju istančane razlike između iskustava prve i druge generacije imigranata. Ovaj se rad bavi plesnim praksama hrvatskih imigranata u Sidneyu (Australija) na individualnoj i grupnoj razini. Na individualnoj razini, sudjelovanje u plesu snažno je sredstvo za utjelovljeno prisjećanje, evociranje uspomena na mjesta i ljude u staroj domovini. Sudionici su iskazivali i duboku želju za poticanjem druge i kasnijih generacija na nastavak bavljenja tradicionalnim hrvatskim plesovima, čak i uz aktivno sudjelovanje u širem australskom društvu. Na grupnoj razini, postojanje udruženja u hrvatskoj zajednici stvorilo je preduvjete za neformalne veze između plesnih ansambala. Pedagoške su se prakse prvotno zasnivale na hrvatskom načinu rada, ali su se s vremenom promijenile s obzirom na nove potrebe, prilagođavajući se željama i stavovima novih generacija. Na materijalnoj razini, prekogranična razmjena prvenstveno uključuje kupnju nošnji iz Hrvatske te korištenje plesnih skupina kao poticaj za prikupljanje sredstava za humanitarne projekte u Hrvatskoj. Općenito rekavši, transnacionalni teorijski okvir omogućuje temeljito istraživanje plesnih praksi hrvatske zajednice u Sidneyu.

Ključne riječi: migracija, transnacionalizam, dijaspora, ples