

# Ethnographic Notes from the Island of Susak: Emigrants, Residents, and the Island's Future

At the end of July 2024, I stayed on the island of Susak with Marina Blagaić.<sup>1</sup> Our arrival in the height of summer, when the island is teeming with tourists, events, and summer fun, was not accidental. The time of the visit was chosen to meet its former inhabitants who emigrated (in Croatian, Suščani, Suicani, Suičani, Sansegoti) and their descendants, and understand their attachment to the island of their origin. On the island, from which almost all the inhabitants emigrated in the 1960s, there is no significant return migration. Only three families returned permanently, all the rest, now for several generations, still live in the USA, and visit the island occasionally and seasonally, for a few weeks, mostly in the summer. At that time, several hundred *Americans* outnumbered about a hundred permanent residents, among whom only about twenty percent are native islanders. This in so many ways specific island (Sokolić and Starc 2020) thus lives a specific emigrant and demographic situation in which *emigrants/seasonal returnees* in the summer months are the majority<sup>2</sup>, and permanent residents the minority population. The demographic ratio of both in the summer months defines sociability as well as future visions of the island.

## EMIGRANTS VISITING THE ISLAND

Emigrants/seasonal returnees could most often be found in the *Malonogometni klub iseljenika* (Emigrant Futsal Club) right next to the largest sandy cove of *Spiaza*. In the early morning, women and men spent time there having a cup of coffee; the early afternoons were reserved for men – *Amerikanci*, *Merikoni* (that's what the locals call emigrants) and locals played chess or cards, conversing in English and the local dialect (Guberina, Hraste and Hamm 1957); one evening they organized a poker tournament; on the Emigrants' Day, the gold and silver coins with motifs of Susak, recently issued by the Croatian National Bank, were presented; in front of the Club, youth competitions in various skills were held. During the evening concert and, in general, on summer evenings, the Club was not big enough to accommodate all the visitors, so they were sitting on the school wall opposite the club, or standing around with drinks in their

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2 Seasonally, the so-called weekenders (*vikendaši*), i.e. holiday home owners and tourists, also stay on the island. Neither of them is included in this research.



Figure 1. Emigrants' Club, photo by J. Čapo

hand. Opposite the Club, in front of the school, on the Emigrants' Day, young dancers performed the Susak dance with shouts of approval from the audience.

The island was especially lively during the celebration of the 39th Emigrants' Day, when numerous television crews arrived. Apart from the statements of politicians from the island of Mali Lošinj, the bishop (who was visiting the parish), the representatives of the Croatian National Bank and the representative of the Croatian Heritage Foundation, the television reports mostly showed the standard scenes of the public events. The reports did not mention that that day is celebrated with a big family lunch, with home-made *makaruni* (macaroni) and *zgvacet* (stew made of various types of meat) and many guests. The guests are mostly extended family members who happen to be on the island, using their short summer vacation as an opportunity to socialize, something that is not so common in the USA due to busy schedules and residential distance. Every emigrant woman has her own secret of making *makaruni*. The Matešić (Matessich)-Terry family generously opened the door of their home to share with us the skill of making traditional pasta, which the mother passed on to the male family members, sons and sons-in-law, the so-called second-generation immigrants, or first generation born in the USA. According to a daughter, by preparing Sunday lunches with *makaruni* the mother was bringing together the family in the USA.

In the reports, there was also no mention of the fact that a week before Emigrants' Day, another, perhaps more important ceremony for emigrants took place: the Procession of the Cross. In commemoration of the discovery of the Romanesque wooden crucifix (*Veli Buoh*, *Veli kriz*) in the sea, in 2017 the procession of carrying crosses between *Gornje Selo* (Upper Village) and the cove where the crucifix was found was revitalized. In the past, the procession was held on May 3,



Figure 2. Susak dance on Emigrants' Day, photo by J. Čapo

the day when, according to tradition, the cross was found in *Pot tarnak* cove (Fučić 1997). After the revitalization, it is held on the third Sunday in July, when many American *Suicani* and their descendants visit the island. Traditions, thus, adapted to the demographic circumstances of the island, which the original inhabitants had almost completely abandoned. This is understandable since it is only for them that this tradition has a meaning. After the ritual procession, the families gathered for a festive lunch, and stayed together until late at night with the evening program organized by the island association *Salbun*.

Reports on the Emigrants' Day were dominantly about the women's festive traditional costume from Susak. One TV station staged the dance around the statue of Sujčanica in front of the post office/club, designed and financed by emigrants through the association *Helping Hands for Susak* (see below). The most interesting details of this year's dance were not communicated to the viewers. Allegedly, it was the first time that the dancers were only Americans, even two Americans who do not have ancestors from Susak (one will marry a girl with roots from Susak!), dressed in colorful festive island costumes. The emigrants filmed the event and at the same time broadcast it via their mobile phones to their relatives and friends in the USA who did not come this year. The reports did not communicate information about how demanding and time-consuming it is to put on the colorful women's traditional costume, that the costume takes up to three months to make and is therefore estimated to be worth \$2,000, that it is mostly made in the USA, and that only a few women living on the island or in the USA know how to put it on... Since getting dressed takes about two hours, and there are few women who still know how to do it, there were also those who gave up on getting dressed. One emigrant, an experienced costume maker, dressed as many as six girls that day! At the same time, a young woman from Susak does

not have her own costume, and even if she had borrowed it, there would have been no one to help her dress up!

In various television reports, we could hear that girls are not hot in costumes composed of several rows of petticoats, *kamizoti*, and woolen over-the-knee socks (cf. Mirković 1957: 19; Ribarić 1957; Selo.hr 2023). But that is not true. It is very hot in the costume, so the girls often reached for small portable fans to cool off at least a little bit. However, they must be given credit, because despite the high temperatures and the inability to lower their arms due to high petticoats, they were in their costumes for hours, long after they had danced and the television cameras had left the island. The women who wore the costume to the solemn mass should also be given credit for wearing it despite the high temperatures.

## HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT IN THE PAST AND TODAY

The small island (3.8 km<sup>2</sup> in area) lived a self-sufficient life until the the last decades of the 19th century, when, relying on the monoculture of winegrowing (1.8 million vines at the peak of cultivation!) it was included in the regional grape and wine trade. Despite outdated processing techniques and fragmented plots, the island thrives on wine production. Economic prosperity led to a significant increase in population (about 1,750 persons in the 1940s) and the construction of the Lower Village (*Donje Selo*) by filling the cove. Due to its sandy geomorphological structure, the island resisted the infestation of phylloxera, which ravaged Dalmatian and European vineyards at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The local economy also survived the Austrian wine clause of 1891, which allowed Italian winemakers to export wine to Austria-Hungary without customs duties and quality assessment. However, it did not survive the planned economy and low wine prices imposed by the socialist Yugoslavia and the inhabitants started to leave the island (Sokolić and Starc 2020).

During the 1950s, before the legalization of emigration from Yugoslavia, about 400 people left the island in various ways; legalization in 1962 opened the door to emigration from the island where it was no longer possible to economically survive. Emigrants mostly went to the USA and homogeneously settled in the town of Hoboken on the Hudson River, in the state of New Jersey (Kovačić and Bara 2022). Mass emigration was caused by viticultural specialization on small estates, planned agriculture and state restrictions on the purchase price of wine, the closing of the fish processing factory on the island and the shipyard on the nearby island of Lošinj (Sokolić and Starc 2020). Emigrants also mention political reasons for leaving (the “*oppression of the communist regime*”), as well as the lack of educational and economic opportunities for children. In just ten years, between 1961 and 1971, the once most densely populated island of the northern Adriatic archipelago thus lost 900 inhabitants (from 1,199 persons to only 323!) (Kovačić and Bara 2022).

In New Jersey, in the 1980s, Ilija Živković, Željka Šporer and Duško Sekulić (1995) found a tightly connected, traditionally oriented and endogamous community of Suščani, which had difficulty integrating into American society. Even the second generation resisted assimilation. United by faith and gathered around the church, football and charitable organization, the people of Susak preserved their native identity and language in New Jersey, creating a second Susak, an island in the middle of American society, thousands of kilometers away from the Adriatic island of their origin (see the booklet about Petar Volarić's life in Hoboken, cf. Volaric 2016).



With the emigration of the population, and then with the sale of houses in the 1980s, a new phase of the island's history begins: approximately 250 houses were bought by the so-called weekenders (*vikendaši*), of whom today the most numerous are Slovenians and Austrians, and some are from Slavonia and Zagorje (mainly in Gornje Selo). Of the hundred or so permanent residents, only a few families live in Gornje Selo. There are no more than twenty indigenous inhabitants permanently living on the island, the rest are either *vikendaši* who spend most of the year here after retirement, or more recent, younger, or middle-aged immigrants from the mainland, who moved to the island after some life crisis or looking for a quieter life closer to nature. A part of the former almost 700 houses (there are 684 house numbers!) is still owned by emigrants from Susak, mostly in Donje Selo. Judging by the maintained roofs, the houses are taken care of even though no one lives in them for most of the year.

Construction is booming on the island. Several construction workers moved from the mainland, and among them a Lithuanian with his family. During the winter, it is also the main activity of the male population on the island, including several immigrants from Asian countries. The construction as the most important (and only!) economic branch on the island is evidenced by the construction materials scattered on the streets in the summer, during non-construction season. The opportunities for permanent employment on the island are very modest; only a few people work in public utilities, water supply, at the post office, in the shipping company *Jadrolinija*, in a school and shop, and in the Emigrant Club, the only bar open all year round. There is also a nurse on the island with a handy pharmacy, working two hours a day, connected to the hospital in Mali Lošinj. A few years ago, the summer office of the Mali Lošinj Tourist Board was closed, and a permanent resident lost her seasonal job.

## THE ATTACHMENT OF EMIGRANTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS TO THE ISLAND

Why, even after six or seven decades since leaving, after two generations born in the USA, the emigrants and their descendants visit their ancestral home?

It is not difficult to understand the reasons of emigrants themselves. They left as young people or children, some in dramatic circumstances fleeing to American ports from the ships they were sailing on, or by boat across the Adriatic Sea to Italy, waiting in Italian refugee camps for several years for an immigrant visa (like, after all, other defectors from Yugoslavia, Šarić 2015). An emigrant's daughter, with emotion and admiration, asked a rhetorical question: "*Do you know how much courage it takes to get ready and leave the island?*" Those heroic journeys (Campbell 1949) remained in the emigrants' indelible memory, which they passed on to their descendants. Some of them left with their parents when they were teenagers and remember Susak very well, so like their parents, they are emotionally attached to the formative period of life on the island. "*We are drawn to the island, we were born there*", explained several emigrants who, even after five decades, visit the island regularly, every year or every two years. Some come several times a year, for example in the summer and to hunt for squid in November. Apart from a few cases, there is no permanent return and settlement on the island. The emigrants practice a seasonal come back for a vacation of several weeks or, if they are retired, a circular movement between the USA and Croatia, staying on the island for several months. After all, this is also the most common practice of Croatian emigrants elsewhere (Čapo 2019).

On Susak, emigrants renovated their parents' house or bought another, most often in Donje Selo,

which is more convenient for their everyday life (here is the only store on the island, a post office, a school, a large sandy beach, the Emigrant Club, a boat dock, etc.). Also, it is easier to move around since the entire village is on one level: Gornje and Donje Selo are connected by about 150 steps, and except for carts—*kariole*, and bicycles no other means of transport are allowed on the island. Gornje Selo was historically the center of Susak, with the parish church and the cemetery. Throughout the 20th century, Donje Selo figured as the center in terms of residence, institutions, and services. Only a few families live in Gornje Selo in the winter, and a few emigrants only seasonally; others, for practical reasons, moved to Donje Selo, where a chapel was open so that older people would not have to climb up to the parish church.

There are various reasons for the visits of descendants of emigrants, the first generation born in the USA and their children. They are determined by the circumstances of family life and youthful experiences: whether they visited the island alone or with their parents; have they stayed there for a long time; when they first visited the island and how often they came later; whether the family avoided coming to the island for some reason (economic situation, separation of parents, some family tragedy), etc. Family and individual migration stories are very different, but the common denominator for all of them is the love for the island and the desire to visit it as often as they can. Some people are visiting the island since childhood, so Susak as a place for “*summer holidays*” has become their “*second home*” (cf. Čapo 2019). Others feel connected to the island due to the time spent with their grandparents, so they also share the nostalgia of the emigrant generations for a time long gone and the emotions for their ancestors whose resting place they visit in the well-maintained cemetery. In opposition to the “*morally corrupt and violent society*” in the USA, Susak is also perceived as a place of “*strong moral and religious values*” that the first generation born in emigration wants to pass on and instill in their children in order that they become “*better people*” and cope with challenges of American life (all quotes communicated by emigrants). For the descendants, the island above all means freedom and closeness with members of the extended family. Indeed, in some families many relatives gather for Sunday lunch; in others, siblings and their families share living space with their parents while on the island. Therefore, the island is also a place to get to know the members of the extended family intimately, to strengthen the family togetherness, and to learn from the elders about island traditions. The island is, thus, the place for building and passing on strong collective memories.

Susak is also a place where young Americans meet and make friends. Some of them met on the island for the first time. Namely, Americans on the island mostly socialize “*among themselves*” because communication with islanders who have no emigrant experience “*doesn’t work, Americans can’t connect with others*”, said one emigrant. “*We stick together*”, said the other. Although this is not the rule, because friendships outside the American circle were also born with the local population or Austrians on the island, the exclusivity of social and family ties that the emigrants forged in the USA is still dominantly reproduced on Susak: while the emigrants for years after immigrating lived in a Susak native bubble, like a Susak island in the American sea (Živković, Šporer and Sekulić 1995; “*ethnic bubble*” according to Colic-Peisker 2002), when the descendants gather on Susak for summer vacation they practice the former exclusivity of their parents and grandparents in the US by preferring to spend time in a transnational enclave. While the native bubble no longer works in the USA because families have dispersed and Americanized, on the island of Susak, the enclave is recreated as a specific migrant bubble of persons with similar experiences of life in the USA, a common language (English) who share origins from the island. On the physical island, a separate social island of American *Sušćani* is formed. By staying on the



Figure 3. View from the Upper Village, photo by J. Čapo

island, they build new memories and gather as a community. Gatherings on Susak for emigrants are at the same time a valuable family time, a time of learning about the family history, but also a time for wider social connecting and adoption of traditional values, as well as strengthening attachment to the island. This is how a specific American - Susak identity is built. These processes are effective because they take place in the background of summer vacation and enjoyment, far from the *“fast and hectic America”*. It is therefore not surprising that emigrants feel a strong connection to the island and return regularly.

An interviewee born in the USA describes her love for the island as the result of an unexpected insight she had when she first arrived there. The then fifteen-year-old girl was stunned by the island without running water and the bathroom without a shower, angry at her parents for bringing her there. But at one point, she saw the modest conditions from which her parents came, their life and her life in the USA *“stuck between two cultures”* in a different light; the view of Susak when returning from a trip to the island of Lošinj taught her *“humility”*:

“Suddenly, it hit me. Now I know why my parents did what they did and it made me appreciate what I had and what they did for us. And that was it. Even now, thinking about that moment I have a chill. And I remember exactly that I was wearing – a top with daisies on. When Susak came into view, when I saw the island... and since then I want to come here all the time, and I became proud to be Croatian”.

I heard similar statements about deep insights from numerous descendants of emigrants from Americas, Australia, Germany, or France (Čapo 2014). What they all have in common is an irrational and inexplicable feeling and recognition of a primal connection and belonging to a place and people they have never seen before except in a photo. Such statements about *“blood and soil”*

underlie the criticized primordialist interpretations of ethnic identity (cf. Golub 1996). However, it cannot be disputed that for some emigrants/descendants of emigrants, they are constitutive for creating a sense of belonging, just as shared experiences of meeting and socializing on the island. In addition, the drastic difference between life in Susak and the American towns contributes to their building a sense of a specific identity: *"This is like our own private island. It is so beautiful. Sea like this is nowhere to be found. No work, no stress, no traffic. Besides, I love to spend three weeks with my grandparents"*, said a young girl from the third generation of emigrants (the second born in the USA).

## EMIGRANT AND LOCAL VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

In addition to regular seasonal visits, Americans take care of their island from the USA: thirty years ago, they paid for the renovation of the parish church, they delivered an excavator to the island, which was used to clear the road from Donje to Gornje Selo and widen the road to the cemetery. Right next to the Spiaza beach, they opened the Emigrant Club, which is also a small photo museum of the island's and emigrants' past, a living room for permanent and occasional residents of Susak, a coffee bar, and a place for exchanging thoughts and ideas, board games and evening socializing.

On the foundations of the good tradition of the emigrant charity *St. Nicholas Society of Sansego*, in 2018, the association *Helping Hands for Susak* was founded, headed by members of the second generation of emigrants (i.e. descendants of emigrants, born in the USA). With the aim of maintaining the island community in the USA and collecting funds for the improvement of the island, two or three times a year they organize events that gather around 150-200 people. In just a few years since its establishment, the association has collected money for the maintenance of the road to the cemetery, the renovation of the parish priest's apartment and minor repairs to the church, and the purchase of a tent for holding events on the island (in agreement and at the request of the local *Salbun* association). The biggest investment so far is the placement of the Sujčanica sculpture (2022), a woman dressed in everyday traditional work clothes with a bucket of grapes on her head. Sculptures in other cities served as an inspiration and incentive for placing the sculpture of a woman from Susak (communication by emigrants).

The choice of the character of the island girl is not accidental; a woman in national costume is a trademark of the island and expresses the deep connection of emigrants with their heritage and, as explained by the members of the association, it also has the additional meaning of sacrifice and hard work of island women, their mothers and grandmothers. That is why she is dressed in ancient (*"tight and strict"*, Mirković 1957: 19) clothes from Susak, and not in the more recent colorful and short version of *kamizot* that originated from Lošinj (cf. Ribarić 1957). The inconspicuous sculpture was placed at the entrance to the center of Donje Selo, on a large empty space in the triangle between the post office/Emigrants' Club, the school and the first village houses. It is surrounded by plaques with the names of donors, American emigrants, and their descendants, and next to it, Mali Lošinj Tourist Board placed a bilingual informational text about Susak costumes.

Both the idea and realization of Sujčanica is an example of a symbolic performance of immigrant identity and traditional culture that generations born in the USA have never known, but only heard about from their parents and grandparents. It is, in the true sense of the word, an inherited culture, transmitted orally far *outside* the context of its origin, after people were forced





Figure 4. A street in the Lower Village, photo by J. Čapo

to leave the island for existential reasons, sometimes in heroic circumstances. It was transmitted during the first years of coping and hard work in the ports of New Jersey in a specific island community that, thanks to the homogeneous settlement in the town of Hoboken, was formed soon after arrival. Not only families, but also the entire transplanted island community was a stimulating framework for nurturing island traditions, stories, and religious rituals. In emigration, island traditions were preserved in the period of their origin, and due to the complete loss of the original context of life, they became precious identity markers successfully passed on to next generations. *Sujčanica* is a symbolic statement of emigrants about their origin and belonging to the island of their ancestors, even though they do not live there permanently; the statue expresses their interest in marking the island abandoned by its original inhabitants with its past.

The attitude and posture of the girls dressed up for the Emigrants' Day reveals that the traditional costume is one of the key symbols of the identity of the emigrants. Their words and the words of their mothers exude pride and satisfaction for the opportunity to perform in traditional clothing on the island of origin of their grandparents: "*wearing a traditional costume from Susak is a privilege and an honor*", said one American-born woman. For another, it is "*heritage*". Wearing a costume "*connects us to our ancestors in a positive way, because we have come so far. Our parents did not have a mattress to sleep on, they were hungry. That is why they left. When you wear a kamizot, you show that you have succeeded in life, your parents are proud... you pay respect to their courage*", said the third. By wearing festive women's traditional costumes, the descendants of emigrants born in the USA express their gratitude to the previous generations for their brave



Figure 5. *Sujčanica* and a girl in festive costume, photo by J. Čapo

life decision to leave the island, pride in everything they have achieved and done, and at the same time, their own belonging to the former and present island community.

The costume is also worn at family celebrations, such as the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the marriage of Zora and Josip Pino Morin a few years ago, when three generations of women from the family wore the *kamizot* (Ekstravagant 2019). Even if there is no audience or a festivity to show off, each wearing of the costume results in a walk through the place and taking photos with passers and the background of a typical island location, while the photos and videos are sent to the distant world of North America. *Kamizot* is therefore not only a sign of native identity, but also becomes a metonymy of the island of Susak, known both to its current and former inhabitants, the Americans, and thanks to television, recognizable to all Croatian residents.

While the sculpture of *Sujčanica* in costume is the clearest performative and identity act of the association *Helping Hands for Susak*, other previous interventions on the island were also aimed at maintaining and restoring important symbols of the place and the former life of their parents and grandparents. By maintaining the cemetery and cleaning the road, they honor their dead ancestors; by repairing the church and parish priest's apartment, they want to ensure that the parish and pastor remain on the island.

Currently, the association is considering further interventions of a practical nature. They would like to renovate the area next to the school, which is allegedly flooded by sea during storms. The idea is to arrange the area for a more comfortable stay in and around it during the festivities, for

example, when the Emigrants' Club becomes too small for all those who want to be at the center of events. They are aware that, as in the case of other interventions in public space, it will be necessary to talk with the city officials in Mali Lošinj, and that obtaining permits and realizing the idea will not be easy. The experience of placing the sculpture has already taught them that such undertakings take a long time.

Emigrants do not ignore the specific island context in which, on the one hand, they are far more numerous than the local population, and on the other hand, although they are very attached to the island and visit it regularly, they only live on it for a few weeks, at best a few months a year, and do not know the living conditions and real needs of the island's permanent residents: "*We are here only seasonally, local people are here all the time. They deserve the utmost respect and care. In fact, they are the ones who govern the island, not us*", a middle-aged descendant of emigrants active in the *Helping Hands for Susak* association pointed out in an interview. Another added that through communication with local population, they will get ideas about what they need as permanent residents.

Indeed, from the point of view of the permanent residents of Susak, there are many needs, above all rehabilitation and improvement of the infrastructure: reconstruction of the promenade along Spiazza beach where too much sand accumulates in the winter, expansion of the new waterfront and paving of the old pier, cemetery rehabilitation, reinforcement of utility services in the summer months, increased water supply in the summer, procurement of vehicles for elderly people to move more easily between Gornje and Donje Selo, ensuring permanent medical care and creating new jobs in order to attract new residents... these are just some of the needs and suggestions that we heard from the islanders. Most of these interventions are under the authority of the Local Board of Susak-Srakane, which operates within the Town of Mali Lošinj. Depending on the commitment of the board members, sometimes is done more, and sometimes less for the island during their four-year term. With the support of Mali Lošinj, an enterprising former president of the Local Board, a returnee from the USA, managed to carry out several improvements, among other things, rebuilding the wall around the school, removing the garbage dump from the entrance to the village, concreting the road between the two villages, unloading construction materials at one location, etc. The three island school children filmed by Andrea Buča in the documentary film *Stani na otoku: Susak 2022. godine*<sup>3</sup> also refer to the need for better development of the island, for example, by removing construction material from the streets and further development of the football field. At the same time, they express their wish that their "*island remain as natural as possible and not look like a city*". This wish coincides with the wishes of emigrants and new settlers from nearby cities who sought refuge from the city's hustle and bustle.

The recently founded association *Salbun* gathers mainly younger locals and, along with the voluntary fire brigade, is the only association on the island. With the financial help of emigrants, their wish is to reopen the retirement home and thereby provide much-needed better medical care on the island. In addition to organizing the cleaning of the island, a Susak dialect course, visiting the retirement home in Mali Lošinj, setting up a modest exhibition of costumes in their premises and opening a second-hand shop to finance themselves, they were extremely successful in organizing Christmas market events on the island in 2022. In addition, they participate in the celebration of the Procession of the Cross, the organization of squid hunting in the fall, and

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3 *Stani na otoku: Susak, 2022*, director and author Andrea Buča, produced by Croatian Radio and Television.

concerts and film screenings in the summer season. Besides practical activities, they also have plans from the symbolic spectrum, for example, the opening of a museum and the acquisition of at least one festive traditional women's costume to perform in it at folklore events.

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Visions of future interventions on the island are different and similar at the same time. For permanent islanders, infrastructural upgrades as well as the job creation are very important (although they may have no idea how to achieve the latter). For the former islanders and their descendants, these are less important elements of investing in the island, at least for now. Those rare emigrants who have returned permanently share the same concerns as all permanent residents of the island. For those who spend only a few weeks or months on the island, the symbolic practices that inscribe their past in the island and confirm their attachment to the island are more important. In addition, they are also interested in landscaping and improving the public areas they use during the July festivities. They are not acquainted with the real island problems, because for them, this is just a "holiday island" (Sokolić and Starc 2020). However, everyone agrees on something: they all want to secure the island's future in some way. Their emphases are different: the emigrants think that investing in religious infrastructure will ensure the continuity of religious services and by the same token the continuity of life on the island. In addition, they care about their accommodation on the island when visiting and plan to invest in a hotel. The local population, on the other hand, more realistically believes that improving economic conditions can ensure the island's demographic and every other future. Neither of them wants modernization in the form of mass tourism.

In the specific context of the *bilocated* island community, significantly larger outside the island than on the island (while the latter is composed mostly of immigrants from Croatian cities), the dynamics of the relationship between emigrants/seasonal returnees and the local population is very specific. The emigrant population/seasonal returnees show a huge interest in the island from afar, and above all, for the island as a symbolic stronghold of their identity and a comfortable place to spend their summer. They would like the island to remain their small private island where they can relax and recharge their batteries every year, surrounded by their families, after the stressful American everyday life. Permanent residents, most of whom do not have continuity of life on the island, are torn between their own demographic deficit, lack of economic opportunities and island isolation on the one hand, and, on the other, their vision for a more sustainable island future beyond global tourism flows. One could almost say that something unique for Croatian conditions is happening on this island – the islanders, both natives and emigrants, do not want to develop the island through tourism, especially not mass tourism!

The current dynamic of relations between emigrants and the local population of the island is working well. They respect and help each other. American investments in the renovation of houses, their maintenance, as well as domestic mediation in the purchase of houses for Americans, create jobs and income to the local population. Therefore, economic cooperation is already being realized and contributes to maintaining the continuity of life on the island. I hope that more intense social interaction between the two groups (possibly with other seasonal residents) and agreements regarding the island's needs will result in further activities for the benefit of all parties, which will help maintain life on this small Adriatic island.



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