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Transnational Experience: A New York Story

At the beginning of the 21 century, American Croatians represent one of the largest ethnic communities in the United States of America. Republic of Croatia is one of the traditionally emigrant European countries, with a relatively largest number of emigrants, that is citizens and nationals who live abroad, and in such a context this article presents a life story of an emigrant and her transnational life environment in which she tells of her own and her compatriots' experience of living in the United States of America.

In the first part the article briefly portrays the historical background of the Croatian immigration to the United States of America, while in the second it tells a life story of a Croatian female immigrant living in New York, as a specific research sample conducted during April of 2009 in the USA, based on conversations held with younger generation of Croatian immigrants living in New York.

Keywords: Croatian diaspora, transmigrants, transnationalism, New York

Out of a large number of Croatians living in Diaspora on several continents, the majority of them live in the USA. According to scientific literature and researches, at the beginning of the 21 st century, there are cca 1, 5 million Croatians living in the United States, thus making them one of the largest ethnic groups in the USA. Modern emigrational research aims at studying changes that occur in emigrational flows. Some 20-30 years ago scientists and researchers noticed more intensive and frequent cross border relations and bonds. The appearance of new phenomena has lead to a new

terminology, such as *transnational social environment*, *transnational social areas*, *transnational social formations* or simply *transnationalism*. This means a continuous maintenance of cross border relations between geographically mobile persons, networks and organizations (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Faist 2006). This sort of bonding can occur in the economical, political, social and cultural areas. Intensifying of cross border relations came as a result of advancement in technology of communication and IT, price decrease of transport services and global development of capitalism. This enabled immigrants to have and maintain stronger and long lasting relations with their families, cousins and friends who live in the motherland. Making different contacts through various networks and communities, organizations in the native country or associated with it, had also been made easier.

Transmigrants as active persons maintain different cross border contacts and develop multi and fluid identities which enable them to easily adjust or resist various pressures of immigration countries, which will be shown in an example of a young Croatian woman, a transmigrant.. She is a specific example¹ out of many Croatian immigrants who leave their native country mainly due to economic situation and desire to study and polish professional skills. She has chosen the USA, a „Mecca and Medina“ of Croatian emigration ever since the beginning of the 19 th century. We shall briefly illustrate the course of Croatian emigration to the USA and point the most common reasons for emigration. The article will describe the life path of the Chosen Croatian emigrant, her transmigrant/transnational experience, the problems she encountered, and her way of adjusting to the new life in emigration and to what extent she succeeded in adjustment in the new country. Our understanding of changes in the modern migration processes will be enhanced by analyzing transnationalism through individual experiences.

Literature overview

Definition of transnationalism

Migration studies, particularly changes and phenomena in the migration processes, have intensified in the past 20-30 years. For marking such phenomena a new complex terminology is used - *transnationalism*, *transnation*, *transnationalisation* – although not accepted by all scientists in the field of migrations. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton-Blanc (1999; 26) have defined transnationalism as a „process which enables immigrants to create social networks which connect their country of origin and their country of immigration. More detailed definition was provided by Basch (1994; Gustafson, 2004; 66) according to whom transnationalism is a „process

¹ The article is based on a single example from the field research about Croatian immigration community in New York, for which purpose conversations and interviews were held with all available members of the Croatian immigration community, as well as with representatives of the Croatian Catholic Mission in Manhattan and Astoria, with an objective of getting information on how Croatians live in New York.

in which migrants create a social environment through their everyday activities, social, economic and political relations, which go beyond national borders. “ This way cross border relationships are built and bonds created and maintained between individuals, organizations and societies of many countries (Faist, 2004). Immigrants who in their daily life, on social and cultural level, practice this way of cross border bonding are called transmigrants, and social networks they create are called *transnational fields or transnational environment* (Povrzanović Frykman, 2001).

Border crossing and bonding in some beyond border space was at first associated with cross border fluidity of large capital, which is starting to be a subject of study at the beginning of the 1960s, as a part of economic studies (Božić, 2004), but with time it drops its economic framework and starts dealing with interactions and organizations whose influence reaches beyond national boundaries in general (Keohane and Nye, 1971; Sircar, 2001).

Due to changes in emigrational movements and relations, a term *transnationalism* starts to be more appropriate in the scientific disciplines dealing with migrations. We have noticed that people who emigrated in the 1960s formed strong and permanent relations with their motherland, which did not lose in strength over the years as it had been suspected; on the contrary, such bonds were firm (Čapo, Žmegač, 2003) and carried on to their offspring who also feel strong bonds with the land of their grandmas and grandpas). (Simek-Caglar 1994, Jurgens 2001, Faist 2000; Čapo Žmegač, 2003). So the term transnationalism became a part of migration studies and it marked an intensifying of certain social relations on global level, despite large distances and national-country borders (Glick Schiller, 1992; Božić, 2004). Transnationalism as a correct term had been endorsed by various disciplines (anthropology, sociology, ethnology) which lead to its wider use and disagreements on its meaning.

Characteristics of transnationalism

A question is raised on why the relations have intensified between immigrants and their motherlands in the second half of the 20th century. Some scientists are of the opinion that the main reason was the development of the communication and IT technology, and lower prices of transport services, while for some it was the new world social and economic order which caused such bonds to intensify (Wakeman, 1988; Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1999). It can be concluded that the combination of the mentions causes had influence on the immigrants to strengthen their relations with their homeland more intensively than their predecessors. Establishing of multiple cross border bonds and interactions of people and institutions (Vertovec, 1999; Božić, 2004) marks a beginning of transmigrational processes which take place in the field of economy/finances (money transactions, investing in the land of origin), in the field of politics (organizations, parties, groups), culture (festivals, religious practice, community celebrations) and society (Faist, 2004).

The social groups who maintain such bonds and relations were divided into four groups by Faist (2004): kin, *networks*, *communities*, *organizations*. The most intensive relations transmigrants keep with their family, close and distant (kin), and display mutual solidarity and support, such as transmigrants sending money to their family in the homeland. Transnational relations are set up also via numerous *networks*, through which services and information are exchanged in order to gain a common goal, particularly in regards to human rights and environment protection. Transnational *communities* are also one way of establishing and intensifying transnational activity which can be focused on a common religion, culture, tongue, geographical area and similar. The latter form of transmigrant bonding is done via social, economic, religious or some other *organizations* with a high level of formal control and coordination.

Considering the power of players participating in transnational activities, we can distinguish *transnationalism from above* and *transnationalism from below* (Povrzanović Frykman, 2001: 14-15). States and transnational companies are players in the *transnationalism from above* which is well known from the researches and studies of the economic globalization, international relations and global cultural trends. New studies of transnationalism are more focused on individual or organized initiatives of immigrants, the so called *transnationalism from below*.

Transmigrants are active people who develop and maintain multiple relations – family, economic, political, religious, and social – which go beyond national borders and creating special transmigrant social area (Faist, 2004). They especially pay attention to their family relations, supported by sending money, gifts, which further strengthen mutual bonds.

Development of numerous social relations creates fluid and multiple identities with transmigrants. Some identify more with the social system of the native country while some with their country of immigration, most retaining multiple identities. By maintaining and manipulating with multiple identities (such as national, ethnic, racial), immigrants adjust or resist to the ideology of the country of immigration and their own position inside the global capitalistic system, depending on the situation and needs (Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1999).

Research has shown (Pries, 1996 and Faist, 1999; Božić 2004) that by establishing and intensifying their transnational relations, migrants (individuals, families and communities) 'integrate and assimilate less and less in the society of their country of immigration, and transfer their relations in the transnational social space. Such processes have drawn attention of the emigrant countries which want to use such intensified transnational processes.

Through embassies, consulates and missions they want to gain attention and loyalty of their former citizens in order to participate in their native country's development, by investing money, promoting, searching for foreign investment partners, and similar (Faist, 2004).

The intensifying of transmigrant relations, their multiple identities, question a definition of state as a homogenous unit. Immigrants become more successful in obtaining

their rights, such as health benefits, social welfare, ownership and voting rights, by engaging into politics, for example. This way they bond stronger to their immigration country, which, as a consequence, does not perceive them as a national threat. More immigrant rights provided by their new countries indicate to increased tolerance in the western countries towards citizens with dual nationalities. (Faist, 2004).

As opposed to traditional one, transnational approach towards migrations equally analyses both countries, their relations and contacts, especially interactions, social activities and institutions which result from the cross border communication (Gustafson, 2004). Transnational approach sees migrations as a continuous process, and pays more attention to transnational mobility of a migrant as an individual, his position in the migration process and her/his process of settlement.

Period of Croatian migration to the United states of America

Croatians in the USA present the largest Croatian emigrant group outside their native country. The record of first emigration of Croats to the USA goes back to the mid 16th century. It is believed that first emigrants came from the Adriatic coast: Istria, Dalmatian coast and Dubrovnik. Emigration during that period was sporadic rather than mass, it was fueled by political changes in Croatia's territory at the time. First Croatian settlements were formed between 1857 and 1874 in San Francisco and New Orleans.

The following periods in history were marked by Croatian emigration to the USA:

- a) From 1880s to WW1
- b) Period of WW1
- c) Period between two World Wars
- d) Period of WW2 and the aftermath of war
- e) Period between 1950 and 1970
- f) Period between 1970 and 1990
- g) From 1990 onwards

A period of the most extensive emigration from Croatia to the United States of America was between 1890 and WW2 (Čizmić, 1998). During that time, when Croatian lands (Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia) were part of the Austrian –Hungarian Monarchy, it was the rural population which migrated the most. Young, unmarried men emigrated, forced by economic and political circumstances of that period². Relevant references (Čizmić, 1998; Bukovčan, 2006; Dubrović, 2008) provide historical background on the issue of why have many Croats from the continental Croatia as a reason for emigration listed the following political reasons: lack of freedom, police (gandarme) terror, multiple and high taxes, money penalties imposed on citizens by foreign rulers, jail sentencing for smallest offenses³, and similar.

² Emily Balch speaks, after visiting Croatia in 1905, about emigrants from Croatia and Slavonia, who said that they want to emigrate „to see if there was still justice in the world“, although they were believed not to have economic reasons to leave their country.

³ Jail sentences were common during election times, when the government tried to repress the opposition parties. The most repressed party was the Croatian righteous party (Hrvatska stranka prava), some

Before the break of the WW1, approximately 30.000 Croats emigrated, from all Croatian lands in the Monarchy. Between the wars there was a decrease in immigrating to the USA, due to new immigration laws, and it was estimated that cca 30% of all pre-war emigrants returned to the homeland. Another estimate showed that between two world wars cca 34.000 Croats immigrated to the USA (Antić, 2002; Čizmić, 1998; Prpić, 1997)⁴. Causes and reasons for emigration were political (dictatorship of the king Aleksandar) and economic (the great depression). During the period before the WW2, Croats had spread all over the American territory, from New York to California, from New Orleans to Minneapolis – St. Paul.

By the time the WW2 ended, a new exodus started, which would last many years to come. References (Čizmić, Šakić, Sopta, 2005; Prpić, 1997) point to an estimate of cca 45.000 Croatian emigrants between the end of WW2 and the 1970s.

Those people were mainly political refugees, including orphan children of the parents who were executed by the new government, and families and individuals escaping from communism. Most of the Croats from that emigration wave had settled with their cousins or friends in existing Croatian colonies. During the 1950s and the 1970s many highly educated individuals (scientists, doctors, etc.) emigrate.

Political situation is listed as a key reason to leaving, and not just economic status. Croats who had emigrated during the 1960s had settled mostly in big cities such as Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. In contrast with the older generation of Croat immigrants, the new immigrants were more educated, liberal and influenced by anti communist politics of some Western European countries and the USA, and as such, held a negative attitude towards the Yugoslav government of the period. During this time Catholic missions and parishes are founded, and new immigrants had become the promoters of Croatian culture in the United States of America.

During 1969 and 1970, the emigration to the USA continues regardless of the disapproval by the government. This is also a period of economic prosperity in the USA. In the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, Croats in the USA go through two very important but difficult periods:

immigrants who settled in the USA after 1880 were members of that party. (Prpić, 1997).

⁴ In November 1911 Croatian parliament introduced more rigorous measures for emigration, as total control had been impossible. The Government announced the so called Article 166 called the "Emigration law". The law banned emigration of all persons who had not served the army without a special permit from the army; all persons who had been charged with criminal activity at the time of emigration, all minors without parent or guardian permissions, all parents who were leaving without securing financial means to the children younger than 15 years of age. The steam boat agencies had been closely monitored by legal actions; all agencies had to be approved by Croatian ban (ruler), and they had to pay a fee of 50.000 krunas, and employing or encouraging workers or advertising jobs in America by the newspapers, mail or in public was prohibited. A special Emigrant trust fund was established financed by taxes paid by every emigrant before leaving the country. It can be concluded that all such measures had a common goal: to stop Croatian immigration! After the WW1 the emigration did not cease, but many changes occurred. After the war the USA introduces a strict law and control on immigration, by selecting a number of immigrants of various nationalities, and according to the Law from 1924, only 671 people could immigrate from the former Yugoslavia to the USA per year. (Prpić, 1997).

1. From the end of the 'Croatian spring' to the death of Josip Broz in 1980,
2. From the breakup of Yugoslavia to the national war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

After the coup d'état against Croatian movement in the Socialist Republic of Croatia, a new wave of Croatian emigrants arrived in the USA, among whom many were political emigrants, who had upon settling started activities against the government (Yugoslav ruling party). At the start of the national war in Croatia, in 1991, and later in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a new big emigration wave had started, as many Croats from Croatia, Vojvodina and Montenegro had left their country because of war.

Researchers (Izmir, 1998; Bukovčan, 2006), as well as the Ministry of foreign affairs and European integration, estimate that there are between 1.500.000 and 2.000.000 Croats and Croatian descendants living in the United States of America. However it is expected that these figures will not grow, as the new emigration trends point to the European Union. In the present time only a few Croats emigrate to the United States of America, for the most part those who have friends or family there. Croatian communities are for the most part based in cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, New York and Los Angeles, in the Ohio valley, and somewhat less in St. Louis, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Sacramento, Detroit, Kansas City area, Milwaukee and Harrisburg.

Croatians in New York

At the early stages of immigration to the United States of America, New York served as a check point where immigrants had their medical checkups, personal documents obtained and legal matters sorted, after which they would depart and settle all over the USA. It was in the middle of the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century that New York became an important city for Croats and Croatian immigrant society due to employment and work. A large number of Croatian immigrants lives in the outskirts of New York, which offer lower prices of housing, in the northwest and northeast parts, such as Queens, Whitestone, Astoria, Bayside and Douglaston. New York is placed on the East coast of the United States of America, at the delta of Hudson and East River, approximately six meters above sea level. On the opposite, west side of the Hudson River, there is Jersey City, in the neighboring state of New Jersey. City area is divided into five boroughs: Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, which are at the same time counties of the state of New York. New York was a starting point for settlers who went to mining and industrial towns such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, and so on, in the mid 19th and the beginning of 20th century⁵. During the 20th and the 21st century New York became a favorite destination, working and residential place for many immigrants from all over the world, and Croats as

⁵ The moment of arrival of their steamboat in the New York harbour, and seeing the sky scrapers of Manhattan was always a moment of excitement for immigrants. There were many harbours where immigrants could enter in the USA, but for the majority the last station was the Ellis Island, a small island near New York and the Statue of Liberty, where the immigrants had to pass various examinations in order to step on the American land (Dubrović, 2008).

well. There is an estimate of 150.000 Croatians and their descendants living in New York today. Most of them live in Astoria, which is a part of Queens, where there are plenty of bars owned and frequented by Croatians: *Valentina*, *Scorpio*, *Lune*, *Albone*, or restaurants on Broadway Street: *Punta dura*, *Rudar* and *Istra*. Croatians living in these areas work mainly in services associated with catering and restaurants.

“Push” and “pull” factors or deciding to emigrate

In most theories on what causes migration there are numerous factors, placed in either „pull“ or „push“ group. „Push“ factors are of socio-economic nature⁶ (a big economic crisis, inability to support one's family, ship building crisis, wine producing crisis, surplus of labor in agriculture, inability of the city to employ the surplus of agricultural population, poor development, scarce working opportunities in the place of residence, unsatisfactory conditions of local – social nature, and other), but also of political nature (unacceptable political situation in the native country, repression by the KPJ (Communist Party of Yugoslavia), communist rule in the former country, 'yugoslavness', relatively frequent wars; two world wars, political crisis of the post communism era and national war).

For the period between 1991 to 2000 Pokos (2001) underlines the following reasons for emigration ('push factors') from Croatia

- a) *economic reasons* (emigration fostered by loss of jobs in Republic of Croatia, post capitalism crisis, finding a better job abroad, etc.);
- b) Political reasons (fostered by refusing to accept the new Croatian statehood, etc.);
- c) *psychological reasons* (fostered by war and fear for personal or family safety, with emigrants who did not get refugee status – for the most part people who had been living in the proximity of war activity, even though some people who had lived in safe areas during Serbian aggression (1991-1992) also had decided to migrate due to one or more listed reasons.

Several researchers from the Institute of Economics in Zagreb, Gelo, Akrap and Čipin have tried answering the question 'who are Croatian emigrants?' (at the end of the 20th century). Judging by the first and second hand experience (2005), they claim that Croatian emigrants are like most emigrants in the world:

1. younger than the population of origin average (many researches had shown that the dominating age group is from 20 to 40);
2. more educated than the population of origin average (as most of our emigration is in search of jobs, it is logical to assume that they were well educated as most of the immigration countries required educated professionals, and immigrants themselves were in pursuit of better paid jobs than they had back home);
3. More vigilant work wise than the population of origin average.

⁶ See more in: Josipovič, 2006.

Case study: analysis of a life story of a Croatian immigrant in New York

A life story of a Croatian female immigrant in New York will be illustrated with an *oral history* method (known also as a life story method), “pull” and “push” factors of emigration established, that is, a detailed process of migration described, from planning to leaving to the new country, including emotions present before, during and after emigration.

Our research participant set her own dynamics, subjects and timeframe of interviews. An interview was never limited in time prior to start; it was held in several sessions ranging from 50 minutes to 3 hours. This applies to the recorded material for most part, as socializing with the immigrant continued after interviews, every day spent in New York on this assignment. It is important to stress that this article was based on a single life story, re-telling of major events which had marked her transnational experience. The purpose was to show to what extent she had participated in the process of transatlantic migration, how she had shaped her journey and what sort of problems she had to solve, and finally, what events had been particularly important and had marked her life.

The chosen immigrant was born 36 years ago in the Međimurje region of Croatia, where she graduated from High School for Economy. After High School she started working occasionally, as her family could not afford to pay for her studies at the Zagreb University; she already had siblings in college that needed to be paid for. She met her future husband in High School, who was on a Čakovec High School scholarship in America for his senior year. His residence in the USA was supposed to be temporary, as a scholarship requirement. However, as this was the war time in Croatia, he stayed and taken on his college education, and completed it in the USA. During the years in college, he used every opportunity to visit his country, his family, and his girlfriend and a wife to be, our examinee. They had a long distance relationship, and she then decided to move to America.

A decision to immigrate to the United States of America

Our research participant has maintained a long distance relationship with her future husband during his years in college. Physical distance and separation had been compensated with everyday communication via text messages, phone calls, Skype and email.

They both had used every opportunity to visit each other, either in the United States of America or in Croatia, to be together. During the course of ten years, their relationship had been developing translocally in two geographical. The decision to emigrate had not been made based only on emotional reasons, but also out of desire to study and prosper. Because of the national war, financial expenses on both sides (airfare,

communication and so on), temporary jobs (his part time and her one-off and poorly paid jobs), as well as her wish to study which could not be realized in Croatia (both of her parents lost jobs, and her siblings were already studying in Croatia), our research participant and her husband had agreed that she should immigrate to the USA, which she had done in April 2001, and they had started living together in his rented flat in Manhattan. She had lived in both the USA and in Croatia until 2007 because she had to renew her working visa every three months, as she had not obtained the 'green card' yet at that time.

Existential battle: jobs and experiences

In June 2001 she started working as a hostess at the restaurant *L'Expressin* in Manhattan, saving money for college. She continuously worked on improving her English, so she could study. She said that she did not shy from hard work; she washed fence bars in the building where she lived, and at the same time worked in the restaurant, with a goal to save money and go to college. At the *L'Express*, she got promoted to a manager, something, she said, which would be difficult to achieve in Croatia in a short time, despite one's hard work and skills.

During the past decade, the *L'Express* was known as a favorite restaurant of many celebrities, and was very busy. Our examinee had met many famous people while working there, such as Michael Jordan, Uma Thurman, Ethan Hawke, Vanessa Williams, Julia Roberts, William Baldwin, and so on. She had also met some nice people with whom she would remain friends, such as Ann from Sweden, who was the restaurant manager at that time, and Ana Iris, a German with Croatian origins.

In 2007 she finds employment in a small private firm in Manhattan. Although she changed that job very quickly, as she and her drug addict employee could not agree on some matters, she had also felt abused and unwanted because she was not American, which is atypical for New York, she was going to work with cramps in her stomach because of bad human relations, daily quarrels over futile matters, schemes and disputes. She said the job was not difficult or very interesting (she worked in administration for American students who wanted to enroll the Medical college in Poland), but after finishing in a hospital and losing a lot of weight, she decided it was time to find another job.

At the end of 2007 she knocked on the door of the Croatian Tourist Office, in the Empire State Building, which was hiring a new person for promoting Republic of Croatia in New York. Our examinee felt happy and excited to have started working at the Croatian Tourist Office, but soon discovered that choice was a mistake. Interpersonal relations of the employees were on a poor level, their conduct was unprofessional, filled with jealousy and 'Balkan mentality', while kindness and professionalism were not valued: "...My boss is jealous of me for my punctuality and meeting set deadlines...Instead of showing appreciation, she would say: „How did you do it, do you ever sleep or eat, you look so skinny.“ ...“She is a middle aged woman and weighs

cca 20 kilos more than me, I could be her daughter by my age, so I could not figure why she had no motherly instinct towards me, instead of competing with me in every way. She is very unprofessional, and I had pulled her out of many compromising situations, and instead of thanking me, she yells, swears, talks to herself, without any reason.... The liftboys said that she complained all the time about the elevator or things in the building in general, and they laugh behind her back....I think she had problems with personal matters and her nerves were weakened, but it was not right to take it all on us at work...”.

Her jobs in Croatia (cashier in a sundry store, occasional baby sitter during evenings), were temporary with low pay, and she did not have much to chose from considering her training and experience. In the United States of America she had more employment opportunities and option to work at several part time jobs, which provided her with more income.

Our examinee stressed that marital status has no influence on selection when it comes to searching and getting employment in the USA, but that getting married means obtaining the „green card“ followed by the American citizenship, which is important for regulating one’s legal status.

It is the rule, she says, that foreigners must work a lot harder to make it in America, comparing to the USA citizens, but have a better chance to succeed than they would in their native countries.

Easiest way to find a job is through a network of acquaintances. This is especially so due to the global economic crisis, when it is important to know many right people, even though ‘networking’ was important before the crises as well. When going to job interview, it is always first with a recruiting agency, while the employer does not see the selected candidate until the final interview, prior to the contract signing. There is an ‘interview dress code’, and different tests and exams, which a candidate must pass in order to qualify for a job. However, there are exceptions to the rule, our examinee gives an example of two of her friends getting jobs irregularly that is, they knew the right people.

Re-emigration: New York-Philadelphia-Chicago-New York

After only five months of adjustment and life in New York, the 9/11 2001 happened, while she lived in Battery Park, close to the WTC. The event had cut deep in her memory; she was alone at home that day, her husband was at work in the Wall Street. She did not know what was happening, nor was she aware of the danger, just like everyone that day. She had photographed the scene from her window; she had even thought that a movie was being shot, when the first ‘tower’ went down, soon followed by the second.

Her emotions that day went from fear, panic and anxiety, to fury, helplessness: “...I kneeled next to the bathroom sink, which I thought was safest, but I did not know

what or from whom I was hiding. After that I was cold and spent an hour showering with warm water. Then I called my husband every two minutes, but as I was unable to reach him, I cried and shivered with fear until he came home...For the first time in my life I felt powerless, wanting to do something, but not being able to; communications were broken, and I thought of my family in Čakovec, how worried they must have been after watching the news, and how they must have tried to reach me without success...I felt awful, and wanted to tell them I was ok, and knowing my mother, she must have been crazy with panic by then...”

After the WTC attack, our examinee lived temporarily at a friends' house at the UES (Upper East Side) in Manhattan, and her future husband goes to work in Philadelphia as his office was transferred from the Wall Street to a temporary new location. Physical separation from her husband had been very difficult for her: “...I was depressed, sad, numb; we had finally started living together and now we had to separate due to his work, and we did not know for how ... I was very nervous, cried often, and I tried to use auto suggestion techniques to calm down, and exercised at the gym regularly, to get rid of negative energy... The fact that I was staying with friends who pampered me, in a sense that I had no chores to do, like cooking, cleaning, etc., meant a lot...”

In September 2001, following her desire to study, she enrolled in the BMCC (Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York). She continued to work in the restaurant and attend her classes until December 2002, when she and her husband moved to Chicago because of his new job. They had lived in downtown Chicago until 2004. That period she remembers as very difficult, it was hard for her to coordinate her job, college obligations and private life. “...Chicago just did not click with me, the city is nice, but life is different from that in New York, people are different... To me America is New York, which is a very friendly place, people are kinder, while I did not have that feeling about Chicago I felt alien in Chicago, while I feel like I always belonged in New York...”

Our examinee did not have many friends in Chicago, and described that period as not very lively in terms of social life. Chicago, according to her, is not as ‘open’ as New York, and everyone in college where she transferred from New York was a lot younger than she, so she did not really fit in; she mostly socialized with her husband’s colleagues and their wives, with a lady called Lovorka, who worked as a temporary consul at the Croatian consulate in Chicago at the time. They had met by coincidence at a store and shortly after that became good friends. They had lived closed to each other; Lovorka was a single mother, and our examinee watched her son while she was away due to business duties. On Saturdays they went grocery shopping together. Friendship with Lovorka was a bright spot in her Chicago life.

With neighbors in Chicago and New York she never had any contact, she did not know them, apart from occasional meetings in the hallway. She was very busy at that time, leaving for work early in the morning and returning late in the evening.

During that period, her sister in law, her husband’s sister from Čakovec, came to live with them, as she enrolled in the college in New York. This is an example of a so called

chain migration, still typical for Croatian emigrants, who tend to bring their cousins and friends to their country of immigration. Because of her sister's in law reckless behavior in the common household, the marital relationship was damaged: "... She constantly skipped her classes at college, which is not common in America, you have to present in all classes, study all year round not just for your exams. So the letters of warning kept coming in from her college, when I would show them to her, she would start yelling at me and denying it. My husband paid a lot of money for education, and kept saying that she would sort herself out eventually and that I continue to keep an eye on her, denying the truth to himself...I would sit at night and wait for her, or go looking for her, while he attended business dinners, and she hung out with drug addicts, coming home often drunk; once I found her in a hospital, in a serious condition... So we had started having arguments over her, and one thing had led to another..." Inability to adopt to the new surroundings, emotional and social crisis caused by moving and a new way of life for the young immigrant reflected in running away from responsibility, obligations and discipline, and manifested in her life on the margins. This type of behavior is typical for younger immigrants, who still search for their 'true self', their identity. Her sister in law returned to Croatia after one year of unsuccessful study.

Our examinee and her husband divorced at the beginning of 2007.

She concludes: "...Looking back on my marriage, I can say that the only good thing about it was getting the green card, even though I married my husband out of love..."!

After the divorce the two of them do not keep regular contact.

She had continued studies in New York – at the Baruch College New York, where she was supposed to graduate in August 2010, in *Management*, majoring in *Operational Management*, psychology.

New beginning in New York

In December 2006 she managed to obtain the green card. Divorce from her husband in January 2007 marked a new beginning. She dedicated herself to her work at first, to help her get over the emotional crises, and then concentrated on her social life. "...I went out on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays to bars, restaurants, movies, theatres, watched musicals in which I enjoy immensely. All of this was not available in a small town of Čakovec where I had lived before. I was 'hungry' for events, new friends, new social circles, everything. I also went out during weekdays if there was something interesting, for example Tribeca film festival which was great. New York never sleeps, that city is awake 24 hours a day, if you are hungry at 2, 3 o'clock in the morning you can eat wherever you want, whatever you want ... go to the movies early in the morning, too ... as far as safety and fear of the street crime is concerned, *no problema*, New York PD is patrolling at every corner, security cameras are everywhere, there is no fear like it used to be ... people back home watch too many movies and crime shows which gives them a twisted idea about New York ... You can even shop in the middle

of night ...At first it was strange to share a table at a cafe with an unfamiliar person, who would ask permission to join me, seeing me sitting by myself, so we would then talk about everything. Then I realized it was perfectly normal and now I do it too, when there is no free tables, and nobody has rejected my request ... that is how I met Cathy, who has become a good friend and we go out frequently ...“

New York is an exceptionally eventful city, and I lead an intense social life, says our immigrant. „New York is a very very friendly city, a sense of freedom is present at every step.“ The whole social environment has influenced a correction of personal opinions and views on different issues, as well as behavior of our immigrant. She stresses that she pays less attention now to the lives and problems of others, stresses the freedom of speech and dressing; she dresses according to what she finds suitable and what suits her mood. For her social life it is very important to feel safe in Manhattan; she only moves in crime free areas, and does not go to Bronx and Harlem. She also stresses that it is very important to own a sense of local/regional identity, which provides her with a sense of emotional security when she moved to another geographical and social environment. After divorce she kept company of several friends from Čakovec who provided her with emotional support when she divorced her husband. She also points out to other friends and people from Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, mainly educated professionals among whom there are no national tensions and who share common interests, and belong to the same social group, sharing one common view – ‘they have abandoned the so called primitive Balkan divisions’, and sharing a goal to make it in the world with their work and knowledge in their respective professions....”!

This example illustrates that apart from local/regional and national identity a wider transnational identity plays a significant role, typical of people who have lived together in the former Yugoslavia region. Cultural transnationalism is a characteristic of migrants from the former Yugoslavia who in the new geographical environment develop a new transnational identity consisting of various subcultures. „When we celebrate somebody’s birthday we go to ‘our restaurants’ to eat burek, baklava, sarma, ćevapčići ... we sing Dalmatian songs, usually by Oliver (Dragojević), Jasna Zlokić, but also Halid (Bešlić) ...“

20. They socialize less due to fast way of living; in New York everything is about work, ...“live to work“, as opposed to Čakovec, where everything is still easy going, „don’t worry, be happy“ attitude towards work and life. Our examinee mentions a Croatian girlfriend from college, whom she sees every day, they support each other in terms of sharing problems, ‘girl stuff’, while other Croatian friends she contacts once a week at the most, via email, Skype or telephone. She is integrated in her new social environment where she has made new friendships; developing a transnational identity and being a part of cosmopolitan transnationalism (see more in Colie Peisker, Val, 2006). In her case common interests bond her with people from different parts of the world and different cultures.

Considering that she and her friends more or less have the same daily biorhythm, they understand each other well and plan their free time together. As far as going out to Croatian bars and clubs is concerned, she is not very keen and dislikes such places:..."Croatian bars in Queens do not attract me as they are about getting drunk (I saw for myself), and that is something I over grew long ago. As I live in Manhattan I use every opportunity to enjoy the variety of social life it offers..."

There are local and regional ethnic organizations, but they are of a closed nature. "...I noticed a generation gap and considerable differences in education levels ... I wish there is a Croatian American organization which would connect my two 'home countries' on daily basis.

Still, she keeps informed of all the cultural events of 'USA/CRO' as she works at CN-TONY (Croatian Tourist Office New York) and she gladly attends..."...I don't go as often I as would like to, due to many obligations at work and in college, last I saw Oliver Dragojević's concert with friends and had fun singing along...there were many Dalmatians, Bosnians and Herzegovians, I bought a CD to which I listen every night, reminds me of my country and the beaches ..."

Two homelands: life between/in two homelands

Our examinee had lived in the following locations in New York between 2001 and 2009: Battery Park, Tribeca, and Upper East Side, which are also the most popular areas for social life. After that she bought a small apartment in East Village. This information can be indicative of her wish to remain in New York. "...My favorite place was Tribeca, something is always happening there, and my apartment was big, light, big bathroom ... but although I live in a lot smaller apartment now, it is mine and I feel good for being able to buy my own apartment after ten years of working in America and paying for my education. I am certain that this would not be possible if I stayed in Croatia.

It is a sad reality..." Considering that our immigrant lives in East Village, a hip neighborhood drawing young population who follow different trends, she enjoys watching people expressing themselves through fashion. She enjoys being different when it comes to dressing (which is difficult in New York, where everybody is different, as she comments), but she is especially happy when people stop her in the street and comment on her outfit, perfume, hair, glasses, shoes, anything: "...I don't know how but Americans notice that I am from Europe ...being blonde, they first guess that I am from Poland or Czech Republic...and being thin, which most Americans aren't, everything I wear looks nice on me, with some European touch in fashion, I would call it Italian in style, everything must match, while most Americans don't bother with that. I never leave house without perfume, I use loads of it, and I make my own hair styles after given a hair cut by a professional ... I love scarves, jewelry, high heel shoes, belts with prints ... ,,

In 2004 she returned to Croatia to get her visa and obtain necessary documents for residence in the USA, which took a long time, until December 2006. During that time she lived at both locations, in both countries, ...“I had been between Croatia and the USA, often on the plane, always with packed suitcases, which felt depressing, as I wanted to be a legal American, with equal rights as them, because illegal immigrants are often target of protests and asked to go home ...“

Even though she identifies herself as Croatian, she admits to feeling more and more American every day, she even says that she is American by some criteria, lives according to American way of life and American culture:“...I mostly eat fast food, walking, which I had not done before, I always rush somewhere unlike in Croatia, and often catch myself running rather than walking, always catching deadlines, plan everything a year ahead, where and with whom I will go...In Croatia it was different, here I started running every Sunday in the Central park, I know all the faces as we run at the same time... I drink coffee from plastic cups, walking, everything I can do at that very moment I do it...”

She stresses the financial bonus of living in America comparing to Croatia, she can afford more material things and save some money. Even though her salary is relatively small comparing to American average, she hopes that the situation will be more favorable when she graduates and gets a better job. She said that she could afford to study and work in the USA, as her salary covered her study and living expenses, unlike Croatia, where her salary would have been enough just to make ends meet. A cosmopolitan environment in New York enabled her to meet people with various cultural and national backgrounds, which had enriched her life experience. She said that life in New York had changed her life philosophy and view points, she had learned to have a positive attitude about life and adopted a motto: „... It is never too late for anything in life! “... Although she feels nostalgic for her country, home and family in Croatia: “...I miss my mom, sister and nephew the most, and even though we talk on the phone and Skype, and send each other email, it is hard to be alone in my apartment ... “, she admits to having more opportunities, better salary and easier life in the USA, which bonds her to her new country and enhances her integration there, while her desire to return to Croatia weakens.

Conclusion

Considering the aim and the subject of this research, the following conclusions can be reached:

In comparison to the old transatlantic migrations to the USA, where most Croatians went due to economic and political reasons back home, the new Croatian immigrants are mainly driven by financial opportunities and acquiring new skills (professional improvement, obtaining various degrees, polishing English skills, and other).

Most of the younger immigrants continue education in the United States of America, and by entering American education system they get secondary socialization, which helps them integrate and adjust more easily to the new living environment. Our immigrant is an example of individuals who gain transnational identity, beside her local/regional identity (Čakovec/Međimurje) and national identity (Croatian), her wider, transnational identity (Croatian/American), plays a crucial part in herself identity determination. Although she primarily feels like a Croat, she notices that her way of living and thinking more and more resembles that of an American. Her identification with American culture and way of life gets stronger every day, and is enhanced by various opportunities that her new land offers, such as education, better standard of living, more active and interesting social life. Unlike the transatlantic migrations, where the immigrants had strong bonds with their motherland (ethnic transnationalism), to the new immigrants ethnic identity is not primary, but professional one and cosmopolitan transnationalism (they live in a culturally hybrid and globally fluid environment). The individual from our story is a representative of the so called social and cultural transnationalism, she communicates daily with her family and friends via different media, she listens to Dalmatian songs, makes Croatian food, and similar, but she also consumes culture from the former Yugoslav countries. In her example we see that a part of immigrants from the former Yugoslavia forms a social community and develops a new trans-cultural identity living in the USA.

In an isolated example of a Croatian emigrant we have observed a practice of maintaining transnational relations, and through that a relation between younger Croatian emigrants with their native land. Although they integrate and adopt more easily to their new country (unlike their predecessors long time ago, who were of the lower social status), and in spite their desire to meet the legal criteria for American residence, the migration policy of the United States of America is restrictive when it comes to obtaining American citizenship.