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Narratives of recent migration: Young, well-educated Croats in Ireland

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To Demian, without whose love, support and endless encouragement none of this would have been possible.

To my mom Zorica and in remembrance of my father Ninoslav, both of who supported me, each in their own way.

To all of the participants in this thesis who took their time and generously shared their stories of migration with me.

Abstract

In July 2013 Croatia has become the latest member state to join the European Union. Access to this single European area, in particular, to economically well-developed countries with a more robust labor market and a higher standard of living than Croatia resulted in intensification of emigration from Croatia. This has particularly affected young, well-educated Croats; ambitious, unsatisfied with the conditions in Croatia and in search of better opportunities abroad. This thesis explores the migration narratives of these individuals who have recently settled in Ireland hoping to shed light on a topic thus-far neglected in research, yet one of immense significance to the future of Croatia and, likewise, serving as an up-to-date example of EU periphery-to-center migration. By employing the method of interviews, this research analyzes ten narratives of recent (post-2013) migration of young, well-educated individuals from Croatia to the Republic of Ireland. The main topics explored are: reasons for leaving, settling and belonging, labor market integration, identity change in migration and migrants' transnational orientation; all of which seek to paint a clearer picture of the experience of individuals in this current wave of emigration from Croatia.

Although every migration narrative is specific, several significant themes reverberated across all migration accounts. In regard to the motivation for migration, the most prominent reasons interlocutors cited were economic stagnation and inhospitable labor market conditions, followed by the desire to escape "Croatian mentality" seen as negative, stagnant and rigid, the promise of Ireland's booming economy and a desire for adventure and self-development. While some participants were successful in converting their particular forms of capital from the Croatian to the Irish labor market, the majority grappled with deskilling, an issue on the intersection of the personal and the structural mitigated by one's habitus and positioning in the new field of action.

Finally, all of the participants stated that they had experienced maturation and a personal transformation for the better thus, in their words, having been profoundly changed by their experience of migration.

Key words: well-educated migrants, EU migrants, Ireland, migration narratives

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1. Introduction

Croatia has traditionally been a country of emigration having endured numerous migration waves continuing until today. Emigration from Croatia has primarily been motivated by economic, and to a lesser extent, political reasons. The most recent migration wave, on which this thesis focuses, started in 2009 (prompted by the global economic crisis), intensified after Croatia's accession into the European Union in July of 2013 and has been principally driven by economic reasons. Access to the single European market, in particular, to countries such as Austria, Germany and Ireland, which have a more promising labor market and a higher standard of living than Croatia, had a significant, although not unexpected consequence – intensified emigration. Specifically, there has been a sizable outflow of young, well-educated individuals which could have significant consequences for the future of the country (Župarić-Iljić 2016).

This topic is clearly significant for the future of Croatia, as well as serving as an up-to-date example of EU periphery-to-center migration. However, that topic is currently under-explored, at least in the context of recent Croatian migration to Ireland. The topic, at present, yields only a handful of research articles and government reports, most of which approach the topic by focusing on the statistical aspects of this current exodus while applying quantitative methods only. Studies which seek to understand the phenomenon from the migrants' point of view are scarce. Relative novelty of this migration wave might be responsible for this gap in research which I seek to remedy. Therefore, this thesis aims to shed light, add nuance and originality by exploring personal narratives of migration of young, well-educated individuals from Croatia who have recently settled in Ireland.

1.1 Objective of the research

The objective of this research is to explore and analyze the narratives of recent migration by focusing on young, well-educated Croats who have emigrated to Ireland subsequent to Croatia's accession to the EU in July of 2013.

By employing the method of semi-structured interviews, my aim is to better understand how migrants construct their personal narratives by focusing on several key topics such as: how the interlocutors judge their decision to emigrate, their process of settling and social integration, their life satisfaction and personal development in migration, their process of gaining foothold in the Irish labor market by utilizing different types of capital, as well as their engagement in the transnational space. In capturing their responses to these subjects, I hope to delve deeper into the experiences of young, well-educated Croats recently settled in Ireland.

1.2 Context

Throughout history, Croatia has had several migration waves. While migration waves of the 19th century were mostly to transatlantic destinations - United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the waves of the 20th and 21st century most often targeted destinations in Western Europe (Župarić-Iljić 2016). Migration from Croatia has primarily been driven by economic and political reasons (high unemployment, low salaries and standard of living, lack of industrial development, high corruption and nepotism), the exception was the wave of involuntary migration that occurred during and after the 1990s, following Croatian War of Independence (fought from 1991 to 1995). The latest wave started in 2009 rapidly accelerating with the accession of Croatia into the European Union in 2013[1] (Župarić-Iljić 2016).

Croatia satisfied all accession requirements and on the 1st of July 2013, officially became the latest member of the European Union. As a new member state, it gained access to the single European market which enabled the country to benefit from free movement of goods, services, labor and capital, as well enabling Croats to emigrate to any EU country. Along with Germany and Austria as the traditional destinations for migrants from Croatia, Ireland has become another prime migration target, especially for the young, college-educated individuals (Draženović, Kunovac & Pripužić 2018:423). There are various reasons for this, the most prominent one being the recent prosperity of the Irish economy, potential ease of integration due to a lack of legal and linguistic barriers (most young, well-educated Croats are fluent in English), as well as a growing number of recently-settled Croatian migrants which act as a ready-made social network to potential newcomers.

However, various scholars (Balija 2019; Župarić-Iljić 2016; Hornstein Tomić 2014; Nejašmić 2014; Lajić 2002) found that the emigration of the country's young and well-educated population is depriving Croatia of cohorts which have the most potential to contribute to the social and economic development of the country. Along with distressing demographic trends, mass emigration leaves numerous consequences with the potential to impact the stability of the country and its most basic institutions and services such as health and social services, as well as employment, retirement, educational and financial systems, along many others. For example, the loss of human capital, one of the main engines of economic growth and development, creates imbalances in the labor market due to a decrease in the working age and highly educated people,

1 Sociologists Potočnik and Adamović provide a more concise outline of Croatian emigration noting three distinct migration waves (1951-1971, 1990s-2001 and 2006-today) locating the last migration wave somewhat earlier than other authors, but also noting its intensification after 2013.

leading to a reduction of the GDP[2] (Balija 2019) of the country. It, likewise, places undue burden on the retirement system because of an unsustainable ratio of working age in comparison to retired people (Družić, Beg & Raguž Krištić 2016). With emigration of young individuals of reproductive age, there is also a decrease in the number of school-aged children leading to closings of schools and other educational institutions. Consequently, there is a reduced need for teachers, professors, and additional educational professionals such as school psychologists, pedagogists and principals along with others working in educational settings (Balija 2019).

Croatian economist and migration scientist Ivan Lajić (2002) discussed this latest migration wave claiming that the continuous trend of recent Croatian emigration is "a complex dynamic process of close interactions of socio-political, economic and other demographic phenomena" (Lajić 2002:136). Since all of the above phenomena is interconnected, the result is cumulative and exponential for the country of emigration generating significant system disturbances.

1.3 Disposition

This thesis begins with the research methodology in which I outline my research paradigm, research strategy (methods used and research design) as well as the research process (access to the field, finding interlocutors, ethnographic material, limitations, ethical considerations and my position in regard to the research). Next, I move on to literature review in which I discuss the current migration wave from Croatia, the labor market integration of Croats in Ireland and personality development of interlocutors in migration. This is followed by the theoretical framework with an introduction, description of the use of narrative theory, section describing symbolic power, social reproduction and class constitution in migration and the utilization of the transnational lens. Subsequently, findings and analysis section are presented followed by the conclusion.

2 GDP (Gross domestic product) is the monetary value of all finished goods and services made within a country during a specific period (https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gdp.asp).

2. Research methodology

In the subsequent section, the research methodology employed in this thesis is discussed. I begin by outlining my research paradigm and the research strategy which makes use of qualitative methods - narrative research and phenomenology. Secondary literature was, likewise, employed in order to analyze the theoretical aspects of the material obtained. Next, the ethnographic material is discussed, along with the description of obtaining access to the field and the process of finding interlocutors. Later, I delve into the analysis of the ethnographic material, limitations and ethical considerations and lastly, I reflect on my own position in regards to this research.

2.1 Research paradigm

The paradigm through which this thesis is shaped is constructivism. Constructivism contends that categories and their meanings are not external, but are social products built through social interaction. Meanings are varied and multiple, as well as subjective, formed on the basis of previous experiences and negotiated through cultural and historical norms (Bryman 2012; Creswell 2009; Berger & Luckmann 1966). Such multiplicity of views leads the researcher to "look for the complexity of views [with the goal of relying] as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell 2009:8).

Constructivism, as a research paradigm, is valuable to this thesis because it focuses on the individual narratives created by the Croatian migrants to Ireland. The narratives are formed through multiple and individual meanings given to their experiences as newly-arrived social actors to a novel environment. In order to obtain insight into these subjective meanings, glimpsed through stories of their lives in migration, this thesis employs narrative research while also making use of phenomenology in order to further the understanding of their lived experiences as migrants.

2.2 Research Strategy - qualitative methods

2.2.1 Narrative research and phenomenology

In order to examine the lives of Croatian immigrants to Ireland, their motivations, expectations, struggles and accomplishments as well as the subjective meanings they have assigned to their experiences, I have employed narrative research. Narrative research is "a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives. This information is then often retold or restored by the researcher into a narrative chronology" (Creswell 2009:13). By exploring the individual stories assembled from the ethnographic material given by each of the interlocutors, I am able to glimpse the individual and

varied meanings they have assigned to their lived experience. While all the narratives share the general circumstances of the experience of migration from Croatia to Ireland, as well as some demographic characteristics such as age range, level of education, time period of moving, they likewise differ and are shaped by the personal circumstances prior to the move as well as the positioning of each actor subsequent to the move. Thus, the narratives are diverse and distinct which explains the complexity and multiplicity of the migrants' varied interpretations of the same general phenomenon of migration.

Phenomenology is utilized in this regard as a means of obtaining migrants' personal stories while attempting to arrive at their clearer understanding. Phenomenological research is "a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell 2009:13). This research has primarily focused on interlocutors' subjective impressions in the hopes of gaining an in-depth insight into their lives in migration. With the goal of arriving at a more thorough understanding of my interlocutors' experiences, phenomenology was a useful research method.

2.2.2 Ethnographic material

The ethnographic material for this thesis was gathered from March 2020 until September 2020. Gathering of the ethnographic material was conducted through in-depth interviews of ten young (age range 25-35), well-educated (bachelor's degree level or above) Croats who moved to Ireland after Croatia's accession to the EU (after July 1st, 2013). While in Ireland, three of the interlocutors lived in Dublin and the rest (seven of them) lived in Cork; however, three subsequently emigrated from Ireland. Half of the interlocutors in this research describe their level of proficiency in the English language (upon their arrival to Ireland) as B2 (upper-intermediate level of English), while the other half asserted that their level was C1 (advanced level) or above (C2 - proficient level of English). The average time spent in Ireland was 2,5 years (shortest time was 3 months, while the longest was 6 years). Additionally, all of the interlocutors have stated that they belonged to the middle class in Croatia.

Ten one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted via video chat. The interviews lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. The semi-structured type of interview was used because it allows for some flexibility, yet aims for "a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them" (Carruthers 1990). The interview guide created prior to conducting of the interviews followed a series of open-ended questions on general topics such as: motivation for moving, coping and settling in the new environment, social networks and integration into the new social environment, employment experiences (with a focus on possible instances of

deskilling) and future plans and ambitions. Although I tried to cover all of the relevant topics, I primarily engaged in active listening permitting the interlocutors to expand upon topics they deemed most relevant and allowing them to, in a way, lead the discussion. All the interviews were audio recorded with consent given before each interview was conducted and the interviews were subsequently transcribed. It was important to gain insight into these topics because they provide personal information about the particular experiences of the migrants and meanings they apply to their experience.

Although Croatian is the mother tongue of all the interlocutors, they are all also proficient in English. Therefore, I gave them a choice of whether they wished to conduct the interview in Croatian or in English emphasizing that it would be preferable that they chose the language they felt most comfortable with, thus allowing them to express themselves with the greatest openness and ease possible. About half of the interviewees chose to conduct the interview in Croatian, while the other half chose English initially, however, most interviews were interwoven with both languages at various points (some phrases, ideas and particularities of experience were more readily expressed in one language or the other). Since I speak both languages fluently, this did not constitute a problem.

2.2.3 Access to the field and finding interlocutors

Due to financial constraints, as well as travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, I was unable to travel to Ireland to conduct the interviews in person. Therefore, all the interviews were conducted via Skype or Facebook video messenger (depending on the preference of the interlocutor). Access to the interlocutors was unproblematic since I previously lived in Ireland myself, so had the acquaintance of many people who recently moved from Croatia to Ireland that fit my specific criteria (young, well-educated, moved after accession into the EU). Thus, I gained access to the interlocutors through my personal and my friends' social networks via snowball sampling. This approach to sampling involves the researcher establishing "initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others" (Bryman 2012:202).

The advantage of this type of sampling is that it is fairly easy to gain access to needed contacts. However, the disadvantage is that "the final sample will be limited by the contacts and networks of the initial sample and will tend toward homogeneity" (O'Reilly 2009:198). While I did notice a general similarity among the interlocutors' experiences, I did find that every interlocutor added their own insights which deepened my overall understanding.

2.2.4 Analysis of the ethnographic material

In order to be able to analyze the ethnographic material with the most accuracy and efficiency, I recorded the interviews and have subsequently transcribed them. I have used thematic analysis to analyze the material; specifically the framework approach (Bryman 2012:579-580). I coded all of my interviews using Nvivo 11.4.3 software program for qualitative data analysis. During the coding process, which was done in two cycles, I have identified themes and sub-themes – reoccurring topics noticed in the data.

In the first cycle of coding I employed the method called "themeing the data" (Saldaña 2013) by determining the most commonly occurring topics in the interviews. I have then grouped those codes into five overarching themes: "reasons for leaving", "settling and belonging", "identity and personal development", "labor market integration" and "transnational perspective" as well as several sub-themes under each main theme.

2.2.5 Limitations

My research was subject to certain limitations. The main limitation was the fact that I was not able to conduct my interviews in person; instead, they were all conducted via video messaging. Although this was the next-best thing and a useful substitute in lieu of in-person interviews, while also saving traveling time and money, it did degrade the quality of the communication to an extent. On-line interviews withheld some potentially valuable additional information in the form of body language that, although partially visible in video, is much more readily available in an in-person interview. The video format of the interview also impeded the flow of the communication owning to glitches and delays due to, at times, poor quality of the internet connection. Because of misunderstandings, numerous repetitions and frustration from both sides, this, at times, led to curtailed responses.

Another limitation was the restricted sample poll which was both relatively small (ten interlocutors) and fairly homogeneous (both due to specific demographics studied and the chosen sampling method) which most probably had an influence on my findings.

2.2.6 Ethical considerations

Reliability, validity and generalization are all important when determining the quality of research. In order to comply with the ethical principles in conducting my academic research and to ensure quality of my research work, several steps were taken.

Primarily, I attained verbal consent from all of the interlocutors preceding each interview. In practice, this meant that every interlocutor was entirely aware of my motives and purpose for conducting the research, as well as how the material acquired will be used.

Additionally, even though my topic is not controversial and the material I gathered is generally not of a sensitive nature, nonetheless, I provided the interlocutors with the option of anonymity by using an alias and obscuring any identifying information in order to hide their identity. They were, likewise, informed that should they feel uncomfortable at any point, they could request the interview to cease, and were told that if they felt that they did not want to answer a particular question, they could forgo it without additional explanation (however, none of the interlocutors availed of these options).

All of the interviews were transcribed, thus ensuring accuracy and validity of the information gathered, while the findings obtained were discussed in a manner reflecting the responses faithfully and with as much precision as possible.

2.2.7 Reflexivity

Since my research is focused on the Croatian community in Ireland, I am, in the words of the sociologist Val Colic-Peisker (2004), doing ethnology in my own ethnic community. In a similar way to Colic-Peisker, my own research topic also made abundant sense: "I was an insider and had preexisting networks and contacts" (Colic-Peisker 2004:83) having previously lived in Ireland.

After having graduated university in Croatia and realizing that my chances of obtaining a job with my diploma (MA in Anthropology and Ethnology) and limited work experience, would be slim if I were to stay in the country, I decided to do what many people my age, background and aspirations in Croatia did ever since the country joined the EU in 2013; I moved to Cork, Ireland. I went with my best friend (who still lives in Cork today) hoping that I would have better chances of finding suitable work there. The only employment I was able to find, however, was as an agent at a call center, a job many immigrants (with a suitable knowledge of English) do, at least initially. The job was very stressful, had no benefits and was paid the Irish minimum wage (which, while adequate for covering life's necessities, was, I felt, not worth the high stress of the job). It also afforded little chance of advancement and was work well outside of my interests, qualifications and aspirations. Not being satisfied with my employment situation nor my prospects (while having also been accepted to Lund University in Sweden), I decided to leave Ireland after six months and move to Sweden. However, I recognize that my experience is by no means universal, so I wished to explore experiences of other migrants of a similar background who moved to Ireland.

Thus, as a Croat with the experience (albeit brief) akin to the interlocutors in my research, I had an insider's knowledge of the topic researched, as well as of the community studied. There were important advantages to my insider status – both in terms of being Croatian, as well as of having gone through the very experience I was studying – the experience of migration to Ireland as

a young, well-educated Croat full of hope for a better life there. Sharing the experience of being in migration, as well as of knowing the intricacies of the Croatian language, the impact of history and the current state of Croatian society on the young people studied made it easier for me to connect with the interlocutors on a deeper, more intimate level which allowed for more openness on their part and, consequently, a more nuanced insight into their experiences.

Upon the start of my research, I was aware that my status of an insider might be of great help, but I was likewise aware that it could hinder my objectivity impinging upon the research. For example, since I found myself deskilled during my experience in Ireland, as well as profoundly unhappy because I was deskilled, I assumed that most of my interlocutors will also likely be deskilled, and if so, will be unhappy with their situation. However, the material I obtained, proved otherwise- even though most of the interlocutors were indeed deskilled (eight out of ten), the ones deskilled were not all necessarily dissatisfied with their situation. My assumptions regarding this particular topic shaped some of my research questions in a way that implicitly assumed that deskilling automatically leads to discontent (like it did in my case). Learning otherwise (with the first two interviews), I revised those questions in order to make them more neutral. This experience prompted me to employ more caution in order to avoid biasing the research with my own sentiments.

Thus, the principal challenge revolved around my ability to distance myself, my own intimate knowledge and perceptions of the topic from those of the interlocutors, all along fearing that it might not be "possible to maintain an ethical level of detachment from personal ties in the research context" (Colic-Peisker 2004:84). Fearing that my research will unduly be steered and molded by my interests while unconsciously influenced by my own experiences and prejudices formed on my own journey, I was reluctant to embark upon this topic.

However, realizing that this is the topic that interests me the most and that it is one that I would gladly and foremost afford my energy to, most likely precisely because it is also of my own experience, one that I wished to understand better, I decided to refrain from any pretensions to objectivity, and aim for depth instead of distance (all the while maintaining caution, as much as possible, in regard to my own preconceptions). Taking into account the perspectives and experiences of my interlocutors, as well as my own, I hoped to bring fullness and depth to the research that my insider's status can indeed provide. Thus, the subjectivity that, I have realized, will inevitably be imprinted on this research, is balanced out with introspection and consideration of my own potential bias, as well as great attention and openness to my interlocutors' perspectives, hoping that the account produced will make up with complexity, authenticity and multivocality what it might lack in impartiality.

3. Literature review

3.1 Introduction

Several themes will be explored in this literature review: the current migration wave, market integration and deskilling, identity formation and personality development in migration.

There is an abundance of migration research in general, but research migration on Croats in Ireland is scarce, hence I primarily used research exploring Eastern to Western EU migration routes since, in its broadest characteristics (EU periphery-to-center migration), it most closely aligns with my own research topic. The literature used was sourced from various disciplines – Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology and Economics, however the most relevant literature, especially regarding the transnational perspective, was chosen with the consultation with my advisor.

The first part discusses the impact that the current migration wave has had, and will continue to have on the future of Croatia such as a significant decrease in population, change in population structure, disturbances of the labor market, as well as dangers posed to the systems of social security and retirement. In the second part, which explores market integration and deskilling, theories that explain deskilling and cross-border transferability of skills aid us in understanding the specific challenges of highly educated individuals in migration and their attempts to position themselves in a foreign labor market. The final, third part describes identity formation and personality development enabled by the very act of migration.

3.2 The Current Migration Wave

Although the current migration wave has a major impact on the future of Croatia, due to it being of a fairly recent incidence, it has not been widely studied. However, a handful of researchers have examined particular aspects of the ongoing migration trend. Several authors (Nejašmić 2014; Ilišin & Spajić Vrkaš 2017; Balija 2019; Hornstein Tomić 2014) have highlighted the dramatic decline in population of the country inferring that it is produced by several compounding factors: the recently heightened rate of emigration, reduced fertility rate and the aging of the population. Of course, these factors are not independent of each other, but closely interrelated. Since younger people tend to migrate at higher rate, the remaining population gets statistically older, which heightens the mortality rate (Nejašmić 2014). While the mentioned compounding factors have been true in all of the previous waves of emigration from Croatia, what distinguishes this wave is the fact that the majority of the recent emigrants are young and well-educated (Rudež 2019). “Statistical data of the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia show that the young population, between the ages of 20 and 34, emigrates at the highest rate” (Rajković Iveta 2017:250). Additionally, a recently

conducted research has found that two-thirds of Croats who emigrated between the years of 2013 and 2019 have a university diploma (Rudež 2019).

Croatian public discourse, however, does not treat emigration, especially of young, well-educated individuals kindly. This is exemplified in the news articles of the mainstream Croatian newspapers with bombastic titles such as "EXODUS: A quarter of a million inhabitants have emigrated from Croatia since 2011, 'ten Opatijas' [a town in Croatia] have gone to Germany alone" (Marić 2020), "BRUTAL TRUTH ABOUT DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN: New astonishing data from the Statistical Office on the exodus of Croats have arrived, in 5 years we have lost 2.4% of the population" (Koretić 2019) many similar ones. Public discourse in Croatia often describes emigration as a demographic catastrophe likened to a systematic extinction of the population brought on, not by inopportune conditions in the country such as nepotism, poverty and high unemployment, but by selfish and unpatriotic emigrants solely concerned with their own advancement. In a country with a relatively small population size, and ravaged with previous experience of war, a fragile national pride lingers, but one easily threatened by forces such as heightened emigration.

The ease, expedience and permanence is another distinguishing feature of the current migration wave. Instead of working abroad for several years with the goal of saving up money and returning home like in the previous migration waves, many contemporary Croatian migrants tend to leave the country permanently which creates long-lasting consequences for the country. This wave is also marked by certain novelties that have greatly facilitated the process of migration in recent times such as: cheap and fast forms of transportation to almost any destination, the Internet/social networks that simplify the gathering of information and finding of new contacts, jobs and accommodation in the destination country, as well as the omnipresence of communication technology which neutralizes distances between family members and friends lessening the emotional toll of the move (Nejašmić 2014). In addition to the novelties that have revolutionized today's experience of migration in general, some factors, in particular, aid in the smoother migration experience of Croats to Ireland, thereby acting as pull factors. The principal pull factor, in addition to the possibility of working legally in the country, a growing network of Croats and the benefits of Ireland being an English-speaking country (a language most young Croats speak well), is the strength of the Irish economy which offers an abundance of well-paying jobs and further career opportunities. The prospect of "a regular and secure salary, a positive workplace climate, fairness amongst colleagues and of employers, a safe work environment with adequate health protection, regular working hours and free time arrangements are frequently mentioned as further expectations" (Hornstein Tomić 2014:276). Many also hope that the gainful employment they expect to obtain in

Ireland will enable them to send remittances to struggling family members back home and/or to save money for their own future endeavors (Hornstein Tomić 2014).

There are also numerous push factors that motivate Croats, especially the young, well-educated ones, to emigrate. Some of those are: unfavorable economic conditions in the country, high unemployment rate, low standard of living, poor entrepreneurial climate, corruption, length of time necessary to find a job, nepotism, difficulty in finding permanent employment in their profession and inadequate salaries (Župarić-Iljić 2016). Economic reasons are among the most prominent pressure factors that motivate large numbers of Croatian citizens to leave the country temporarily, and often permanently (Balija 2019; Peračković 2016).

The high youth unemployment rate with "30,1% unemployed persons aged 15 to 29 is one of the highest rates in Europe" (Ilišin & Spajić Vrkaš 2017:156). In addition to that, many young people living in Croatia see slight prospects of becoming independent and self-sufficient, with "74,5% of young people still living with their parents and the average age of 31,4 at which they are able to move out of the family home, putting young Croats at the very top of the European average" (Ilišin & Spajić Vrkaš 2017:156). The reasons for this are primarily of financial nature with "82,2% of young Croats listing finances as the main obstacle in their quest for independence" (Ilišin & Spajić Vrkaš 2017:156). Dwindling economy and lack of prospects in finding a well-paying job further pushes young people to move out of the country. Thus, the process of migration is understood "as a complex form of investment in human capital that is influenced by future expected income levels and the relative probability of employment opportunities in destination and origin countries,, (Draženović, Kunovac & Pripužić 2018:16). Younger, well-educated people, in particular, are motivated to emigrate hoping for a greater chance at affirmation of their intellectual potential and improved career opportunities abroad. This type of emigrants can be considered a "brain-drain" for the sending country; however, many obtain jobs for which they are overqualified, hence it would be more accurate to term this phenomenon "brain waste" (Rajković Iveta 2017).

3.3 Labor market integration

While it is assumed that highly educated migrants are the epitome of a "socially mobile group because they possess 'transnationally valid forms of cultural capital', meaning that their skills can be utilised in any suited labour market" (Nowicka 2014a:2), many of them, at least initially, experience deskilling. Deskilling or overeducation, refers to "employment of people with qualifications higher than required by a particular job description" (Nowicka 2012:16). How migrants' skills are valorized can have a significant impact on the way they evaluate their chances

for success in the receiving country, and ultimately – how they utilize their qualifications and skills in the new labor market.

The creation of a single European labor market enabled free flow of workers across the European Union "granting the same treatment in matters of employment as a national of that state" (Hardill & Macdonald 2000:684). Many migrants who decided to embark on a journey to another European country in search of improved employment opportunities, undergo an initial experience of deskilling in a new country. Reasons for this are myriad, but some of the most prominent ones are: the language barrier, difficulty in obtaining recognition of qualifications and other skills obtained in their home countries, racial/ethnic discrimination that migrants encounter, unfamiliarity with the new labor market, as well as limited social and professional networks. Another barrier set by the employers is the invocation of national capital (advantaging candidates with domestic qualifications and/or professional experience), even when the candidate has adequate qualifications, and comes from a comparatively privileged position as an EU migrant.

An additional explanation for deskilling was also captured by Nowicka (2012) in researching the reasons for an extremely prevalent mismatch in terms of qualifications and income amongst highly-qualified Poles in the UK. "Both the opportunity structures and the migrants' subjective perception of their own resources determine exactly how their skills are validated" (Nowicka 2014a:8). However, this process can be ambiguous and it involves effort. Yet, personal convictions of many migrants that their skills do not fit with the composition and conditions of the destination country's labor market often inhibit that effort (Nowicka 2012).

"Skilled professional migration is founded on the possession of 'portable' skills, which are recognized by the receiving country" (Hardill & Macdonald 2000:690). Since migrants' skills are not always readily translatable to a new setting, migrants, at least initially, become a part of the lower stratum of a country's labor market working the lowest-paid, most insecure jobs in the harshest of conditions. Prevalence of migrants in this type of jobs signals "the existence of a specific 'migrant division of labour' in cities like London, with migrant workers from the Global South especially found doing the 'dirty work' of neoliberalism such as care and cleaning" (Datta et al. 2009:857). Indeed, while well-qualified and highly skilled migrants from around the world tend to relieve shortages in labor-deficient fields (such as IT, medicine and engineering) of core EU countries, there is a concurrent assumption that "any demand for low-skilled migrants will be filled by the flow of migrants from the EU accession states" (Datta et al. 2009:857).

Many migrants look for work through recruitment agencies, which might seem like a logical place to start in a new labor market. However, in the UK, according to Nowicka (2014a) and Stenning and Dawley (2009), as well as in Ireland (reported by the interlocutors in this research)

recruitment agencies are uninterested in any proof of qualification, but were instead "primarily interested in filling positions which they perceive as non-skill-related vacancies that are difficult to fill because of the pay, flexibility and conditions" (Nowicka 2014a:13). Migrants use recruitment agencies as a quick and easy entry point to the unfamiliar labor market of the destination country and "many agencies recognize[d] the 'work first' motivation of migrants: because many migrants are looking for an immediate income, and thus for the first work available" (Stenning & Dawley 2009:286). Still, by using agencies, these migrants often unwittingly position themselves away from the possibility of obtaining skilled employment, with many highly qualified migrants finding themselves in low-wage, precarious employment (Nowicka 2012).

3.4 Identity formation and personality development in migration

A question of identity is one that inevitably shows up in migrant research since a change of context tends to produce fluctuations pertaining to migrants' identity and personality.

Questions regarding changes to migrants' identity - how those identities are constructed and, ultimately, projected as well as processes that affect identity transformation while in the flux of migration were considered by Weldu Michael Weldeyesus (2007) in a paper exploring the narratives of Ethiopian migrants in the US. Weldeyesus examines how "Ethiopian immigrants use narrative as a vehicle for constructing their identity as mainstream citizens in the United States,, (Weldeyesus 2007:1). The author studies the discrepancy between a previous and a present self, recounting the main causes of the discrepancy between these two identity positionings. He concludes that there are two core topics that are present in the narratives:

> "The first is constructing the current self as a more socialized individual, in contrast with the former-self, representing a less socialized one characterized by linguistic insecurity, nostalgia, and lower self-esteem, among other things. (…) The second is the identity that less socialized immigrants construct through negotiation with more socialized immigrants or citizens of the host country making narrative a collaborative enterprise" (Weldeyesus 2007:1).

The examined narratives seek to project an integrated and more socialized self, one that is proficient both linguistically and culturally; findings useful for considering the transformation that occurs in the process of migration.

Another exploration on the topic of identity fluctuation in migrants were explored by migration researchers Beatriz Macias Gomez-Estern and Manuel L. de la Mata Benitez (2013) in a paper exploring "the role of narratives of migration as sense-giving devices that interweave cultural and personal dimensions in identity construction" (Macias Gomez-Estern & de la Mata Benitez

2013:348). This topic is studied through individual narratives which were utilized as rhetoric devices by a group of Andalusian internal (in Spain) migrants and non-migrants. The narratives explored opinions about their cultural identity through a focus group task in which close attention was paid to emotional aspects of personal experiences. The authors argue that for individuals participating in the construction of their identity in migration situations, "narrative constitutes a bridge between the past and the present that makes sense of the past adjusting to the present conditions, thus creating a link with a desired future project" (Macias Gomez-Estern & de la Mata Benitez 2013:349-350). Narrative, through its sequential ordering of significant life events, acts as a tool of meaning-making in the individuals' lives, as well as of their identities. This tool can be particularly significant in a biography that contains an event of migration which tends to act as a discontinuance and a disturbance in the usual flow of a life.

Katy Gardner (1993) discusses the different images and representations of "homeland" vs. "abroad" evoked by migrants villagers in Sylhet, Bangladesh. While "'homeland' refers to spirituality and religiosity, 'abroad' is linked to material bounty and economic transformation" (Gardner 1993:1). A specific locality is also utilized in order to depict a set of social and economic connections such as inequality between "home" and "abroad" as well as the domination of the core enacted upon the periphery. However, a dependence of the people at home on the migrants abroad is, likewise, continually evoked as Bangladesh is depicted as a very poor country, whereas foreign lands are seen as strong and powerful. Migration is, thus, seen as the only route towards economic prosperity and advancement.

3.5 Conclusion

In the first section dealing with the current migration wave in Croatia, I cover several authors (Balija 2019; Draženović, Kunovac & Pripužić 2018; Ilišin & Spajić Vrkaš 2017; Rajković Iveta 2017; Nejašmić 2014; Rudež 2019; Hornstein Tomić 2014; Župarić-Iljić 2016) who describe the features and consequences of said wave. They argue that the most important feature of this wave is its permanence and expedience altering permanently the demographics of Croatia. This creates long-lasting consequences such as population decline, in particular, of younger and well-educated cohorts, reflected in labor-market disturbances that put in jeopardy the social security and retirement systems.

In the second section dealing with market integration and deskilling of migrants, I bring together several studies such as (Nowicka 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Erel 2010; Datta et al. 2009; Hardill & Macdonald 2000; Stenning & Dawely 2009) who write extensively about EU periphery-to-center migration focusing on the phenomena such as deskilling, transnational space of reference and

agency and skilled international migration giving insight into transnational labor practices and helping to elucidate the problem of deskilling of well-educated migrants, as well as exploring the question of transferability of skills across borders.

Finally, in the third section of the literature review, identity and its relation to migration is discussed. Weldeyesus (2007) and Macias Gomez-Estern and de la Mata Benitez (2013) explore the topic of identity fluctuation in migration while Gardner (1993) elaborates on meanings and representations given to terms of “homeland” vs. “abroad” evoked by migrants villagers in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

In order to analyze the findings of this thesis and, in so, improve the understanding of the interlocutors' narratives of migration, a combination of several theoretical approaches will be used.

In the first part, in order to analyze migrants' narratives, a cluster of narrative theories and concepts is used. Several main concepts used are: longing for normality, concepts of delayed and emerging adulthood, differentiated embedding, construction of normality through consumer identities, individualization and the construction of a reflective project of the self. All of these theories and concepts help in delving deeper into migrants' circumstances and motivations, providing insight into the manner of building of individual narratives.

In the second part, Bourdieu's cluster of theories regarding habitus, the field, practice, illusio, different forms of capital and social reproduction are of primary importance in understating migrants' positions thereby shedding light on the process of class constitution in migration. Several additional concepts and theories relating to class mobility such as contradictory class mobility, elevated cultural capital and subject level of class analysis further elucidate the process of social reproduction in migration.

The third part, which deals with transnationalism, illustrates the lives in ongoing mobility, as well as employs the theory of transnational social space of reference and agency which interlinks migrants' simultaneous positioning in two societies. Additionally, the strategy of intentional unpredictability explains future positioning of migrants.

4.2 Narrative theory

Migration narratives seek to shed light on the overall path of a migrant by approaching it from a specific point of view – emic or etic[3], as well as by focusing on several pertinent topics. Personal narratives of migrants serve an important purpose in migration research – they provide a glimpse into the experiences of individuals by providing them with the opportunity to communicate their experience, which is thereby given structure, coherence and meaning. Narratives also enable researchers a deeper understanding of the process of migration and form a more accurate representation of people in migration. However, narratives "are not transparent renditions of 'truth' but reflect a dynamic interplay between life, experience and story" (Eastmond 2007:248); they are representations of the past interpreted in the present. Marita Eastmond's 2007 study of narratives in

3 **Emic** - from within (from subject's point of view); **etic** - from outside (from the observer's point of view).

forced migration discusses the construction of migrants' stories from their own point of view which provides an invaluable tool for researchers as a "site to examine the meanings people, individually or collectively, ascribe to lived experience" (Eastmond 2007:248). Such narratives enable an intimate look into individual lives and how the actors understand and represent their experience, negotiate meaning and evaluate their significance in the larger context.

The topic of the construction of narratives is further explored by Louise Ryan (2015), a research fellow in the field of migration who studied Polish migrants in London with initial short-term migration plans which were extended over time. Ryan's study reveals changing attitudes toward settling in the new country expressed by the migrants while shining light on various migration trajectories. Similarly to Eastmond, Ryan's research is pertinent to my thesis because it elucidates the process of intra-European migration. A key insight of Ryan's (2015) study is that "the reasons for continuing to stay abroad may be different from the initial motivation for migration" (Ryan 2015:8). This might account for the change in plans regarding the duration of the stay in the new country which, the author explains, does not solely hinge upon employment opportunities and career success, but, likewise, entails other factors such as family and romantic relationships, opportunities for migrants' children, different lifestyle possibilities, and a chance at unencumbered self-expression and self-development.

In another study which explores changing of migration paths of Poles in London, Louise Ryan utilizes the concept of "differentiated embedding", a concept that goes beyond the simplistic, static and dichotomous "either/or" view of migrant integration, instead showing it as a set of "dynamic processes through which migrants negotiate attachments and belonging to varied degrees in different social and structural settings" (Ryan 2017:3). She concludes that sentiments of attachment and belonging are central in negotiating embedding which is not linear, static and final, but forever fluctuating. "Differentiated embedding" was noticed in the narratives of interlocutors in this research, in particular, in regard to their social integration, a finding which will be further explored in the section "findings and analysis".

Dominika Baran (2018), a migration scholar, takes a slightly different approach to narratives from Ryan by recounting the construction of identities in experiences shared via private Facebook messages. She explains narratives as versatile devices that enable the telling and understanding of a particular story; in this case – an experience of migration. In many migration narratives, a prominent part – one that sets the stage of a story, is the experience of positioning oneself within a novel context. As explained by Baran: "[i]n narratives of migration, this situating of one's migrant identity is accomplished discursively through recounting, revising, and reinterpreting of one's

migrant journey" (Baran 2018:21). This retelling of one's journey can aid in the processing and integration of the experience for the individual.

A narrative is often composed ethnographically by employing the qualitative method of analyzing of social phenomena through the emic viewpoint. By addressing questions related to the path of migration, narratives yield a direct insight into the experiences of self-representing individuals. The common argument all the aforementioned authors (Eastmond 2007; Ryan 2015; Ryan 2017; Baran 2018) make is the importance of stepping away from homogenized and generalized representations of the migration experience by, instead, recounting migrants' narratives from their personal point of view.

Yet, although representation of migrants' experience through their personal account is crucial in providing a deeper and more refined understanding of the particular migrant's path, a narrative is not a strictly sovereign affair, but instead is situated in and "interwoven with the sociocultural and political-historical, as well as spatio-temporal context" (Galasiński & Galasińska 2007:49). Likewise, the migration accounts in this thesis are all shaped with the background of a particular collective narrative - the socialist past, the experience of war in Croatia with its ongoing repercussions on the country's economy, as well as the globalized present from which the subjects operate, all of which are factors that must be taken into account.

Attila Melegh (2007), a sociologist and a migration researcher, writes about migration narratives in the era of globalization. He analyzes re-integration of social economies into "a new phase of world capitalism [in which, he argues] globalization is a powerful macro-structure increasing global inequality and hierarchy" (Melegh 2007:375) driving migration. He also discuses the impact of discourses on the perception and management of migration. In particular, he mentions the discourse of "'civilizational' or East/West slope" along which migrants position themselves and are positioned by others "on a descending scale from 'civilization to barbarism', from 'developed to non-developed'" (Melegh 2007:379). This discourse, in which migrants are involved in and influenced by, in turn, shapes their individual life story.

In the process of telling, narratives are inevitably shaped and filtered both by the teller (in the way that they have perceived and expressed their experience), as well as by the researcher's reception of that telling and their own cultural assumptions. In order to fully understand actors' narratives, we must take into account the sociocultural, historical and political context in which the narratives are formed. As such, narratives provide a glimpse of the interaction between a person and society telling us "how social actors, from a particular social position and cultural vantage point, make sense of their world" (Eastmond 2007:250). In many accounts, usually a collective narrative can be discerned, one that might be refuted or affirmed by the actors. Collective narratives,

therefore, are stories people tell others, as well as themselves, about themselves. They form "discursive construction of the past [and] are often symbolic strategies of addressing their predicament in the present; as such, they can be unpacked to elucidate a community's understanding of itself" (Eastmond 2007:255-256).

A particular collective narrative around which individual stories are built – the experience of war in Croatia and the turbulent post-war transition period – is evident. This turbulent period experienced during the formative years by the post-war generation (such as the interlocutors in this thesis) is preceded by an almost-rigidly structured, albeit immensely secure lives led by their parents in the pre-war socialist period (when Croatia was a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). Similarly to Burrell's study of the experiences of Polish youth in the post-socialist period, the interlocutors in this thesis were likewise one of the first generations to reach adulthood in the new capitalist regime with very different "rules of the game". However, with the collapse of the regime and descent into war, the pre-structured life course experienced by their parents' generation was replaced by instability and uncertainty of the era and, in particular, "the loss of predictable routes into adulthood and working life" (Burrell 2011:414).

Traditional markers of adulthood such as: "completion of full time education, entry into the labour market, leaving the parental home, formation of an independent household, entry into cohabitation/marriage and parenthood" (Skelton 2002:101) have, due to precarious economic and social conditions in the country, become increasingly unattainable to the current generation of young Croats. Consequently, the full transition into adulthood has become a remote possibility, hence many "from a traditional point of view, [have] not yet made the full transition into adulthood" (Jendrissek 2014:57). Living in perpetually unstable and impoverished circumstances with ongoing limited prospects thus propelled an increasing number of young people to emigrate in order to achieve independence from parents, experience personal maturation and reach for a more promising future not available in their own country.

Attainment of adulthood, therefore, becomes contingent on the act of migration. It can be claimed that this cohort of migrants are experiencing what the psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (2006) describes as "emerging adulthood" only after migration. Arnett explains that because nowadays the majority of people "finish their education, obtain stable employment, marry, and have their first child much later than in the past" (Arnett 2006:111), a time period between adolescence and attainment of full adulthood that he terms "emerging adulthood" has appeared in most industrial nations. This period is described as the "age of identity explorations, the age of instability, the self-focused age, the age of feeling in-between, and the age of possibilities" (Arnett 2006:121), a period young people in this research were only able to fully experience after migration.

Ulrich Beck (1992) puts strong emphasis on the idea of individualization in the period of second modernity[4] claiming that the individual, who is becoming the central unit of social life, has been dislodged from the standard life-course and its concurrent commitments and relationships while being expected to forge his own life path from the multitudes of alternatives available. Individualization hence "means that each person's biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions" (Beck 1992:135).

Giddens (1991) makes an analogous claim to Beck in discussing the "reflective project of the self". He explains that a shift towards post-traditional culture leads individuals to actively construct their self-identity which then becomes a reflexively organized project. This endeavor "consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives [which] takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems" (Giddens 1991:6). In late-modern societies there is, according to Giddens, a continuous reflexive construction of the self as an outcome of constant uncertainty and risk.

However, such precarious circumstances simultaneously create a "longing for normality". In a broader sense, the idea of normality is centered around the concepts of predictability (of experience) and safety. Ivana Macek, an anthropologist who wrote about normality in the context of war, explains that (during peacetime) "most people perceive normality as a stable, taken-for-granted state. [...] conviction that this is how things really are [which] seems central to our feeling of security" (Macek 2009:8). Migrants strive for "normality" in their destination country and contrast it with experience of perpetual material deprivation (which is a part of the shared discourse) of their country of origin. "Normality" is described as the ability to "cover everyday expenses and to secure what they thought was a 'decent' or 'normal' standard of living" (McGhee, Heath & Trevena 2012:715). As mentioned by Nowicka (2012), the migrants primarily "seek 'normality' in respect to finding employment and being adequately remunerated for work" (Nowicka 2012:18).

Some migrants primarily equate "normality" with being able to afford various consumer items expressing what Bauman (2007) has termed as "consumer identities in consumerist cultures". According to Bauman, the "society of consumers" is "the kind of society that promotes, encourages or enforces the choice of a consumerist lifestyle and life strategy and dislikes all alternative cultural options" (Bauman 2007:53). In such a society, concepts of "responsibility and responsible choice, which resided before in the semantic field of ethical duty and moral concern for the Other, have shifted or have been moved to the realm of self-fulfillment" (Bauman 2007:92).

4 **Second modernity** is a term coined by Ulrich Beck which signifies the period after modernity (from the 1960s onward) denoting a move from linear industrial phrase of modernity into a reflexive phrase (risk society) (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeos1357).

On the other hand, Lopez Rodriguez (2010) says that migrating "produces a sense of searching for a 'normal' life" (Lopez Rodriguez 2010); therefore "normality" after the move can be described as a period migrants hope will manifest after the initial time of uncertainty and challenge that accompanies the first, turbulent stages of migration.

4.3 Symbolic power, social reproduction and class constitution in migration

In order to understand the way social class[5] is constituted in the process of migration and further enlighten the broader reasoning behind the decision to migrate, it is useful to turn to theories that explore social reproduction and symbolic power.

Foremost in such theorizing is the work of the French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1986) theorized on the relationship between the field, the larger, objective structure and habitus. Habitus refers to the "cognitive structures people use to deal with the social world" while the field is not "a structure, but rather a term used to describe the series of relationships between the positions in it" (Ritzer 2005:5-6). Each field is characterized by a particular habitus and doxa (undisputed rules that govern a field) existing autonomously of the actors or institutions that are its components while acting to restrain them. However, the field is not "the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:98).

Practice, what people do, is the product of the interaction of habitus and the field. The practice, in turn, shapes a particular disposition for social action and is conditioned by the position of each actor in that field. In order to clarify this idea, Bourdieu employs the analogy of "the game" to explain the "coordinated yet undirected workings of a social space organized as interconnected fields" (Ritzer 2005:69).

The game is played on the field (a place of perpetual socioeconomic conflict) by utilizing different types of capital at one's disposal. Bourdieu describes the three primary forms of capital – economic, cultural and social.

Economic capital is comprised of financial resources such as money, property rights, ownership of any kind of means of production or other forms of material wealth; Bourdieu considers it the root or disguised form of all other forms of capital. Social capital can be classified as one's connections or a membership in a particular group; a lasting network of mutual relationships and acquaintances which has the potential to provide resources. Cultural capital consists of embodied habits (knowledge, habitus, abilities), objectified cultural goods (books, works

5 **Class** - "a social category which refers to lived relations surrounding social arrangements of production, exchange, distribution and consumption." (Bradley 2014:432).

of art, dictionaries, etc.) and institutional credentials (educational certificates, diplomas, professional titles) that a person possesses (Bourdieu 1986).

There is, however, another form of capital that employers often tacitly evoke – national capital. Even though most EU migrants' do enjoy a privileged position of having their qualifications formally recognized, employers nonetheless "invoke criteria such as the lack of local professional experience. This turns apparently neutral job specifications into 'national capital' and enables privileged access to skilled jobs for those considered properly part of the nation – i.e. not migrants" (Erel 2010:648). Hence, national capital (or its absence, in the case of migrants), which can be considered an embodied form of cultural capital, can further decrease migrants' chances at obtaining better jobs.

Different forms of capital are interconnected as well as convertible to other forms of capital. Bourdieu and Wacquant emphasize "the importance of the composition of an individual's overall capital [...] further mediated by individuals' 'position-taking'; that is, how they strategize to employ their capital" (Erel 2010:647).

Herein comes the concept of *illusio*, that is, being invested in and seized by the game; "to accord a given social game that what happens matters, that its stakes are important and worth pursuing" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:116). Every particular field calls forth and imbues with meaning a specific type of interest, a certain *illusio* thus implicitly recognizing the stakes of the game, but likewise distinguishing itself depending on the place one inhabits in the game as well as the trajectory that led one to a particular position within it (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

Basic similarity among different fields enables actors to move between them creating and strengthening additive outcomes, of hierarchy in particular. Fields are multiple and can best be comprehended as systems of power relations; they can be understood as places, as well as means of interaction between individual actors and the wider collective of institutions (Ritzer 2005).

In applying Bourdieu's ideas to the process of migration, we can recognize the two locations – the labor market of the country of origin and of the destination country – as two separate, yet interconnected and interacting fields. The migrants are actors that move between the two fields in hopes of attaining recognition and valuation for their particular forms of capital. Since the rules of the game often differ in different fields, various forms of capital are valued (and rewarded) differently.

The middle class, educated migrants' hopes are often implicitly predicated on the belief in "a meritocratic paradise" (Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Nowicka 2012) - the idea that countries of "the

West"[6] have an egalitarian system which, above all, values individualism, dedication, competence and education guaranteeing "anybody who works hard and gains experience and knowledge on the job a promotion irrespective of his or her class belonging" (Nowicka 2012:20). A strong belief in meritocratic principles and the will to achieve is intimately related to class consciousness – to the belief that hard work and merit will ultimately be rewarded with an improved social class positioning in the future.

Yet in the supposedly merit-based systems of "the West", the ideal of meritocracy is not realized. There are various factors that influence social mobility[7]: "personal abilities, attributes, societal and environmental factors" (Botterill 2008:8). Thus, the hierarchy is built not solely on merits, but likewise on ethnic and class origin, prior wealth, social connections, gender and various other factors.

Further complicating matters is today's rapidly changing, globalized society. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) described its most salient features naming it "liquid modernity" or "late modernity". The term "liquid modernity" refers to today's society characterized by uncertainty, fluidity and constant mobility. Individuals in such a society rapidly exchange one social position for another thereby frequently changing jobs, careers, homes, partners, values and even, shifting their identities. They are unencumbered by traditional restrictions and duties, dis-embedded from rigid societal structures such as religion, familiar ties, class and tradition, having sole responsibility in forging of their own life-paths. However, Bauman, as well, claims that "there is a wide and growing gap between the condition of individuals *de jure* and their chances to become individuals *de facto* - that is, to gain control over their fate and make the choices they truly desire" (Bauman 2000:39). This claim bespeaks of his doubts regarding the degree of freedom and possibility realistically afforded to an individual of late modernity. For although individuals of today might, indeed, be freer than in the past to create their own lives and are provided with various opportunities to do so, their paths are nonetheless still determined by different societal structures and their own place within them. In fact, I would argue that an individual's chance at self-determination and ability to forge his or her own life path is primarily determined by the position they hold in a particular societal structure and hierarchy. The particular social class an individual hails from, in large part, shapes and determines

6 **"The West"/"Western world"** in "contemporary cultural meaning, the phrase "Western world" includes Europe, as well as many countries of European colonial origin with substantial European ancestral populations in the Americas and Oceania" (https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/western_world.htm).

7 **Social mobility** - "concept used to describe the movement or opportunities for movement of individuals between social groups in society and the associated advantages and disadvantages that come with such movement" (Botterill 2008:8).

the amount and quality of the various capitals they come to be endowed with, subsequently allowing, to a greater or lesser extent, the freedom to, indeed, forge their own path.

In the case of the group that was studied in this thesis – the young, well-educated Croats that have moved to Ireland after the accession of Croatia into the EU in 2013, all possess a considerable amount of cultural capital - primarily educational, as well as linguistic (in addition to English, several are also fluent in other languages). They also possess a (usually) modest amount of economic capital that they arrive with in the country, as well as some social capital incurred by the virtue of belonging to the group of Croatian migrants in Ireland.

Whether they are successful at achieving an improved social class positioning in their destination country depends on their ability to transfer their cultural, social and economic capital to the context of their destination country. Class maintenance or upward social mobility is often an important "motivating factor behind migration, e.g. in cases where migration is seen as a means to achieve certain class aspirations" (Cederberg 2017:3).

While some migrants are able to take advantage of the possibilities offered in the destination country, many experience "contradictory class mobility". Coined by Salazar Parreñas in her work on the lives of migrant Filipina women employed in the West whose "domestic work simultaneously involves an increase and decrease in class status" (Salazar Parreñas 2000:574), the term broadly describes the experiences of "migrants who have achieved a higher income through domestic work in Western countries, but experience downwards social mobility by doing work holding a low social status (while often being highly educated)" (Cederberg 2017:2). This concept can, likewise, be applied to the Croatian migrants in Ireland in this thesis as many of them went through a process of downward social mobility (at least initially).

Some migration scholars (Nowicka 2014b; Kelly & Lusis 2006; Kelly 2012) claim that migrants tend to experience "elevated cultural capital", irregardless of acquired socioeconomic status in the destination country, due to the sole fact of being able to earn their living in a foreign country, a fact that, in itself, incurs both status and prestige. "Being involved in a transnational social space, migrants gain new possibilities of valuation and elevation of cultural capital, which then become a valuable resource in coping with the devaluation of institutionalized cultural capital such as school certificates" (Nowicka 2014:83). On the other hand, the idea that "for some migrants, the experience of downwards mobility impacts on their social status in both the sending and receiving country" (Cederberg 2017:9), is a position perhaps more applicable to the interlocutors in this thesis as many have faced judgment from people "back home" due to deskilling (and a consequent lowering of their social status in both countries).

However, it is important to understand class as "experiential and subjectively constructed [which] provides an important means of discerning its role in the lives of transnational migrants" (Kelly 2012:180). Therefore, it is essential to utilize "subject level of analysis of class" in considering actors' personal interpretations of their own migration narratives which can provide an alternative rendering of the accustomed understanding of social class positioning.

4.4 The transnational lens

Migration can be viewed through a transnational lens[8] which helps in better understanding the way cultural, economic and social forms of capital are transferred and validated between nations. Several migration scholars (Nowicka 2014a, 2014b, 2012; Faist 2000; Kelly 2012; Kelly & Lusis 2006; Schrooten, Salazar & Dias 2015) acknowledge that migration is seldom a unilinear process that ends with settling in the destination country. Transnational theory has provided insight into the study of migration by substituting a simplistic idea of population movements as one-way events with the notion that migration trajectories are often much more dynamic, diverse, complex, at times multiple, and often continual, experiences. Transnational theory has thereby "drawn attention to the significance of attachments to people and places that transcend the confines of particular nations" (Fog Olwig 2003:787).

Anthropologist Karen Fog Olwig has given a salient example of such migration practices with her study of three families of Caribbean origins settled in various parts of the world, but still fostering ties and, to varying degrees, preserving identities associated with their places of origin. However, while some family members pursued various migration strategies throughout their life, others' plans had changed in the course of their migration experience which makes many of them escape facile classification into a single migration category. Hence, Fog Olwig asserts that it is "difficult to capture such changeability with terms such as 'emigrant', 'immigrant' or 'transmigrant', that have movement between places, rather than movement through life as a frame of reference" (Fog Olwig 2003:800).

Schrooten, Salazar and Dias (2015) describe the lives of Brazilians in Belgium and the UK whose experiences "are marked by an ongoing mobility that consists of a multiplicity of potential routes, which are often unstable and which may be accompanied by changes in status" (Schrooten, Salazar & Dias 2015). They, essentially, "live in mobility". The authors dispute what once was considered a unilinear journey from the origin to the destination country, instead emphasizing Brazilians' multiple trajectories, destinations and changes in status. This transnational,

8 **Transnational lens** considers "the space of origin of migrants to be just as relevant as their space of destination" (Nowicka 2014a:3).

unpredictable life strategy is employed in order to better their chances at improving their life circumstances which, for a portion of the population, might be the only option available at achieving social mobility.

Mirjana Morokvasic, another migration researcher, wrote about transnational practices focusing on Central and Eastern Europeans who tend to "'settle within mobility' [by] staying mobile 'as long as they can' in order to improve or maintain the quality of life at home" (Morokvasic 2004:7). Such an experience of migration can, therefore, be considered a lifestyle, one that is increasingly common due to a highly globalized world, affordable transportation, permeable borders (for some, such as EU citizens) and relative ease of settling in a new place facilitated by availability of crucial information and connections via the Internet. While such a lifestyle might, at first glance, seem advantageous since it maximizes migrants' chances of success and enabling the freedom of movement, the difficulties and disadvantages of the strategy can be numerous. Such a lifestyle most often reflects increasing instability of today's working-class migrants burdened with precarious and poorly paid jobs, fragmented families, sporadic social ties, absence of stability and feelings of despondence, lack of belonging and displacement.

Lisa Åkesson (2011), an anthropologist and migration researcher, wrote about migrant remittances practiced by the individuals from Cape Verde providing an example of the maintenance of transnational social bonds via the practice of economic exchange. Renouncing the usual understanding of remittance transactions as a practice rooted in economic rationality, Åkesson instead approaches the question as a social practice viewing it through the lens of anthropological theories of gift relations. She finds that "[t]he Cape Verdean case shows that transactions between migrants and residents reflect ideologies of social relationships between relatives who live far away from each other, but also that these relationships are continually shaped by remittances" (Åkesson 2011:345). Åkesson engages with the practice of remittances in a novel and creative way departing from the common western understanding of money and monetary transactions as impersonal, an understanding that tends to render economic gifts unacceptable in close social bonds. She, instead, shows that there is a close dynamic between close personal relationships and economic exchange.

Migrants embedded in transnational social space of reference and agency indeed "direct their activities towards both the society of destination and the society of origin, and with a tendency to judge their social positions based on the rules of both societies" (Nowicka 2014a:7). Nowicka examines the way in which post-accession Polish migrants to the UK approach the themes of success and failure in their lives, in particular focusing on their migration experience. Their perspective, by living in the transnational social field, yields a specific outlook in which, Nowicka

argues, “failure is relative to a normatively fixed, locally and historically produced, expectation of success” (Nowicka 2014:75).

The tendency to use the rules of both the country of origin, as well as the destination country in order to evaluate their position is called “double system of reference and agency” – a continual comparison of the rules and conditions in their origin country and the destination country which provides them with a unique worldview. By existing in this transnational social space, migrants obtain new possibilities of valuation of their cultural capital, that then becomes “a valuable resource in coping with the devaluation of institutionalized cultural capital such as school certificates” (Nowicka 2014:83).

In describing the experiences of young Polish graduates who migrated to the UK, Nowicka (2012) delineates four phases of the transnational system of reference and agency. While in each of the four phases migrants “constantly judge their own circumstances with rules of the country of origin and settlement, the workings of this double system of comparison are different in each phase” (Nowicka 2012:22).

In the first phase, prior to migration, migrants are motivated to move abroad because of the negative experience in their home country and the promise of better opportunities abroad. In the second phase, having moved abroad, migrants tend to take low-skilled but, comparatively to their home country, well-paid jobs. They, however, rationalize this decrease in social status by employing the double system of reference and agency in order to justify, to themselves and others, their migration path. In the third phase, in order to cope with the disappointment of their migration experience, they compare their situations with the people back home focusing on their overall better standard abroad. While in the forth phase many migrants, unsettled in their current circumstances and ambivalent about the future, leave all options open in regard to their future plans and so continue to live in the transnational space of global possibilities.

Sociologists Derek McGhee, Sue Heath and Paulina Trevena (2012) further reflect on transnationalism by writing about individuals settled in a transnational social field. Specifically, they examine autobiographies and practices of Polish migrants in the UK. This is illustrated by conceptualizing of the migrants’ agency while exploring mutual influence of the participants’ memories of their past in Poland and comparing them with their present in the UK in order to understand how they impact their future plans. The authors here focus on the subjective and autobiographical evaluations of the migrants’ lives “across temporalities and borders” (McGhee, Heath & Trevena 2012:713). In so, they argue that “recent Polish migrants living in the UK in the post accession context often live in between two or more ‘homes’ in physical and also emotional-temporal sense” (McGhee, Heath & Trevena 2012:724).

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Narratives acquired during this research allowed insight into the process of migration of young, well-educated Croats from the periphery of EU toward the center. This process consists of the initial stages of moving, hopes and goals they take with them on the journey, successes, difficulties and disappointments faced, differences and similarities between countries noticed along the way and personal skills that helped them during the turbulent time of relocation. Life satisfaction in Ireland (as opposed to Croatia) is also examined, the impact that the process of migration had on their personal identity, their work experiences, the process of social integration and their evolving sentiments toward Croatia. The migrants' plans for the future, transnational aspirations and reflections on their overall experience have, likewise, been studied. All of these elements help paint a picture of an immigrant's journey.

The findings and analysis will be presented by focusing on the four themes that were noticed to be most relevant for this research: reasons for leaving, settling and belonging over time, labor market integration, identity change in migration and the transnational perspective.

5.2 Interlocutors

In this chapter, I will provide a brief description of the ten persons I have interviewed.

Aleksandra is from a small town near the Croatian capital of Zagreb. She is 32 years old and has lived for 6 years in Dublin, Ireland moving there by herself. She has an MA in Economics from a university in Croatia. She has also previously lived in Canada and in the United States for a year. Her primary motivation for moving to Ireland was unhappiness with Croatia's labor market and unfair employment practices.

Agata is from a small town on the Croatian coast. She is 25 years old and came to Cork, Ireland alone. She has spent one year there after which she moved to the UK to pursue further studies at an MA level. Agata has a BA from a university in Croatia in Russian and French language and literature. Her primary motivation for moving to Ireland was to work there for a year and save money for her planned move to the UK (in order to pursue an MA degree in Development studies at a UK university - which she managed to accomplish).

Bernard is 32 years old and comes from a suburban town near Zagreb, Croatia. He moved with his girlfriend to Dublin, Ireland where they spent 2,5 years. He has a BA in Project Management and Finances from a private university in Croatia. His primary motivation for moving

was to experience an adventure, but also to try to find a job in his field, which he was unable to do in Croatia.

Hugo is 33 years old, from Zagreb, Croatia. He lived for 3 months in Dublin, Ireland where he moved alone. He has an MA in History and several years of experience as a history teacher in Croatia. His primary motivation for moving was to try to find permanent employment (which he had difficulty in obtaining in Croatia). He also wished to acquire financial stability.

Karlo is from a suburban town near Zagreb, Croatia. He is 32 years old and has been living in Cork, Ireland for three years. He moved there with his best friend. He has a BA degree in History and Philosophy and an MA in History teaching. His primary motivation for the move was to find a decent job and better opportunities, experience life in a new society and move away from the stifling and overly conservative surroundings of Croatia. Karlo still lives in Ireland, although he expresses that he would eventually like to move to some other country, but probably not back to Croatia.

Mia is 30 years old, from a small town in central Croatia. She has lived in Cork for 2,5 years moving there alone. Before Ireland, Mia lived in Germany for a few years and got a job transfer to Ireland from there (which was thus the primary reason for the move, along with personal reasons of ending a relationship in Germany). She has a BA in English and Portuguese language and linguistics from university in Croatia, but has since decided to pivot to human resources, a field that she is passionate about.

Marta is from a larger town on the coast of Croatia. She is 31 years old, has lived in Cork for nearly 3 years moving there with her (now ex) boyfriend. She has a BA in Art History and French language and literature. She works in customer service for a large company and is moderately happy with the job, although it is not in her field. Primary reason for the move was to find a permanent position (a permanent contract) while gaining financial security and independence from her parents.

Nena is 31 years old, from a larger town on the coast of Croatia. She has, so far, lived for 2 years in Cork, Ireland. Initially, she only went for a visit to a best friend who, at the time, lived there, however, during the trip, Nena has met what would become her future partner. She began a relationship with him and so eventually decided to move to Ireland in order to progress the relationship. Her move was planned as a short-term move, and both she and her partner wish to return to Croatia after a few years of life in Ireland. Additional reason for moving to Ireland was to save up money for future endeavors in Croatia (such as buying property and paying for a few courses). Nena has a BA in Art History and French language and literature, and an MA in Art

History. She works in customer service in a large company in Cork and is satisfied with her job in which she has subsequently progressed.

Sara is from a smaller town in the center of Croatia. She is 27 years old and has lived in Cork for 2,5 years. After finishing her studies, Sara was unable to find an adequate job in Croatia, so decided to move, with her husband, to Cork, Ireland. A part of her family already lived there (a parent, two siblings, her father later also joined them). Her primary motivation for the move was to find a job in her field and settle down. She has a BA in International Relations from a university outside of Croatia. Sara changed several jobs in Ireland, primarily working in customer service.

Toni is 35 years old from a smaller town in central Croatia. He has, so far, lived in Ireland for one year. Initially having moved to Dublin with former girlfriend, after the breakup, he moved from Dublin to Cork where he found a new job. Toni has an MA in English and in Sociology from University of Zagreb. He also has experience as a translator, and English teacher in elementary and foreign language schools. He has since integrated socially into the Irish society and likes it there working as a customer service representative for a large company.

5.3 Narratives – before and after migration

5.3.1 Reasons for leaving

The most frequently mentioned factors influencing the participants in this thesis to embark upon the journey of migration to Ireland will be explored below. Subsequently, the interlocutors' narratives relating to their migration experience will be examined in detail.

5.3.2 Economic reasons

Aleksandra, is an example of an interlocutor who chose to migrate to Ireland primarily due to economic reasons. Her story succinctly encapsulates a large number of the stories I have encountered over the course of this research - the stories centering around despair with the lack of opportunities in Croatia and fears about the future. Economic reasons such as high unemployment rate, low standard of living, corruption and nepotism act as primary push factors motivating many young Croats to leave the country (Župarić-Iljić 2016).

While living in Croatia, Aleksandra's father wanted to get her a job through his connections since he worked as a manager in a large company in Croatia. She declined the offer, claiming it goes against her principals, and after searching for a job by herself for a few months without success, decided to try her luck in Ireland saying that "the experience [of how the job search went] disappointed me a great deal and I lost faith in the entire system, which basically drove me to leave".

Comparing the perceived opportunities available in Croatia vs. Ireland primarily in economic terms and labor market conditions, another interlocutor Agata says that her motivation was mainly of economic nature: "just going somewhere where I can easily kind of get into the labor market. Cuz that's not as easy in Croatia."

Mia, like many others, was primarily motivated by the financial prospects offered in Ireland: "one of my main motivators was like I did want to improve my financial situation, so [...] In Croatia it would be very difficult to be self-sufficient and independent with salaries over there", uncovering another facet of the process of migration by interlinking it with the class position of the migrants in her social circle.

> "Most of my friends from university and from high school are actually outside of Croatia and they're working there and they're fairly happy. Most of them do not have any plans to come back [...] And, if I look into my kind of, my circle, the circle of those people, those are middle-class people and most of them are highly educated".

Mia is linking migration with upholding of the (middle) class position which, while increasingly uncertain in Croatia, is more readily accessible in Ireland; a perspective, in her account, confirmed by the fortunate outcomes of the friends and acquaintances who have moved abroad.

Stating that she believed it would be easier to get into the corporate world of her field in Ireland, Mia claims that:

> "the mentality around work is very different in Ireland than I had back home in Croatia. Back in Croatia, you kind of have to do what you have been doing for 30-40 years until you retire and here I actually, not that I have the ability, but I'm also kind of motivated and pushed to look beyond what my certification and profession is and I can explore other areas of human industry, so this flexibility and mobility was kind of the ultimate motivator".

All of the above accounts describing reasons for emigrating from Croatia speak about abnormal conditions there in terms of economic circumstances – high unemployment, continual material deprivation and narrow options in terms of career prospects. They point to a desire to establish normality in terms of material life conditions by migrating to another country. This idea of normality encompasses, as per McGhee, Heath and Trevena (2012), the ability to cover everyday life expenses as well as ensure a normal standard of living. As explained by Hornstein Tomić (2014), emigrants from Croatia are principally guided by the prospect of the strong Irish economy which, purportedly, offers a multitude of well-paying jobs, excellent working conditions and an

abundance of career opportunities. Nowicka (2012) describes this quest as migrants' aspiration towards economic normality - satisfactory labor market conditions in which people are able to attain adequate employment, job conditions and fair remuneration for work. Thus, migration is implicitly understood as a complex investment in human capital (Draženović, Kunovac & Pripužić 2018) predicated on the belief that it will bring higher future income levels and better career opportunities enabling self-development and affirmation of abilities for well-educated individuals.

5.3.3 Croatian mentality

Karlo expressed that he was equally motivated to move by both economic as well as social reasons:

> "In Croatia I was not able to find a decently paying job in my field, but I was also disillusioned by the entire social climate of the country which sadly translated into a great personal dissatisfaction with life in Croatia. I was motivated by some kind of anger with the conditions in the country, so I decided to go".

Interlocutors emphasized that one of the main reasons for the move was a perceived negativity in Croatian environment and mentality which they longed to part with. Agata stated that what she hoped to gain with the move were "different perspectives, because I was sick and tired of Croatian mentality and negativity there and I was literally starving for a little optimism". Several other interlocutors, likewise, cited social climate and the mentality of the people as a big motivator for leaving. For example, Marta echoes feelings of many others in expressing that: "mostly it's like mentality of Croatians that I've come to be bothered by… everyone is so, so pessimistic".

Mentality of a nation, in this case of Croats, cannot be analyzed as an objective concept since it comprises of various subjective interpretations and ideas of what it means to each individual. However, a vast majority of the interlocutors in this research have mentioned "Croatian mentality" as one of the reasons for leaving the country, warranting an explanation. The interlocutors tended to illustrate the concept of "Croatian mentality" with mostly negative descriptors such as: narrow-minded, pessimistic, overly-traditional, rigid, and contemptuous/disrespectful. The concept tended to be employed as an explanation of why things are not and never will, in their opinion, function well in Croatia thus rendering their emigration a necessity and their return an impossibility. Ironically, they are displaying the very mentality they are describing – an overwhelmingly pessimistic attitude toward life in Croatia. The concept seems to serve as a personal coping mechanism allowing for the onus of leaving to be placed on society, instead of on the individual. In Croatian public discourse emigration is often represented as a demographic disaster brought on by disloyal and selfish individuals - emigrants. Hence, a necessity

of excusing the "abandonment" of the "motherland" might implicitly be present in many a young migrant's mind.

5.3.4 Desire for adventure and self-development

While most of my interlocutors did emphasize economic prospects and employment-related reasons for leaving the country, as well as a lack of opportunities in Croatia, others had additional motivations that related to the prospect of adventure and self-development.For example, even though Agata's primary motivation was financial, she, likewise, said that she moved in order to experience personal growth and gain a new perspective, while Bernard stated that he primarily "went on an adventure". Mia claims that her motivation was that she "always wanted to try something new and kind of see how work-life balance looks like in other countries, apart from Croatia". Marta expressed that she, likewise, was motivated by the possibility of "just getting the experience outside of the country."

Although migrants do, to a large extent, equate attaining "normality" with achieving financial and career goals, as well as satisfying material aspirations, they are, by no means, the only considerations when attempting to establish "normality". According to Nowicka (2014) as well as what this research has shown is that, in addition to economic security, migrants also stress immense importance of stepping outside the confines of traditional, conservative framework of their country, finding psychological well-being and a wider array of opportunities and novel experiences while feeling a sense of belonging (in their new environment). These are all determinants which would, to them, encompass a sense of "normality".

5.3.5 Inspired by others

Interlocutors additionally gained courage to emigrate after hearing and/or reading stories from other people that moved to Ireland before them, such as Hugo:

> "I mainly chose Ireland because now, over the last few years before I left, many people went there and everybody was talking about it [...] Everyone said that you can very easily find a job in Ireland".

Marta says that a friend of her ex-boyfriend who already lived in Ireland at the time prompted her ex and herself to move explaining that he described Ireland in exulted, though unrealistic, terms: "he was telling us these stories where everything is awesome. You come in and they give you a job. The rent is basically free and he makes so much money [...] yeah, there was like a lot of misconceptions before I moved."

Bernard stated that his girlfriend and himself moved to Ireland hoping to "maybe try to get jobs in our field of study [...] because everybody was talking about Ireland as the land of opportunities".

Several of the interlocutors in this study expressed, implicitly or explicitly, the inspiration they acquired from the stories of previous Croatian migrants to Ireland who have described the country in terms of what could be likened to the concept of "meritocratic paradise" (Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Nowicka 2012). This concept is predicated on the idea that western countries have a merit-based system that allows all individuals to attain upward social mobility through ability and hard work. This system, they believe, will enable a more righteous and equitable exchange between their own merits and economic assets allowing for social mobility, prospect often unachievable in their countries of origin. Although the belief in a meritocratic paradise remains a guiding principle for many migrants, it is debatable whether this ideal is realized, even in the most developed countries of the world. Various things besides personal merits and hard work (such as ethnic/racial origin, class, gender, sexual orientation, connections, luck, other circumstances) do influence social mobility, as will become apparent throughout the narratives in this thesis.

5.4 Settling and belonging in Ireland

The process of settling in Ireland was described differently by every interlocutor. By examining the way migrants constructed their narratives, we can attempt to understand how they experienced the process of migration. In analyzing the narratives we are additionally aided by theories that explore social reproduction and symbolic power which then reveal the constitution of class in migration.

5.4.1 Initial steps

Aleksandra moved to Ireland alone describing this experience as "terrifying, but I was carried forward by a rush of adrenaline". Having experienced troubles with finding an apartment, Alexandra emphasizes the difficulties of finding accommodation in Ireland. This was, to one extent or another, echoed by all interlocutors of this research, especially the ones who, like Aleksandra, settled in Dublin.

Agata, on the other hand, moved to Cork, by herself at the age of 25 and has spent a full year there. Her move occurred under rather fortunate circumstances; through a website that connects people who provide free accommodation with people who are willing to offer some work or service, she was able to find a place to live (thus, in addition to her full-time job, Agata was responsible for doing internet research in exchange for room and board, free of charge). She says: "I

knew it was really, really hard to find accommodation in Ireland, so I considered myself to be one amongst the lucky ones".

Bernard came to Dublin with his girlfriend, both of them finding employment from Croatia. Elaborating on the first step of their journey, Bernard says: "It was more of luck. We applied for one job offer in Croatia. We did the interview and everything in Croatia. And got the jobs in Ireland. And came to Ireland like… for an adventure". Describing the initial process of moving as rather easy because: "the company we worked for, they organized the living space for us, the house, all the things - the papers, they helped us move there to get the PPS number[9], get a bank account. Basically, we got…we got everything".

Karlo underlines the difficulties he first encountered when adjusting to a life in a new country: "the first 2-3 weeks it was really hard. I literally felt like I was dreaming… like what I am experiencing is not real. I assume this was the first shock since, like I said, I've never lived in another country before. I was really fearful – whether I will make it, will I have enough money to survive until I find a job, will I find a job and a place to live. But after that first period, when things started to settle down, I felt better".

What Karlo is expressing can be explained by a wish to return to a period of "normality" of a regular life – a period that signals deliverance from the time of turbulence and difficulty. The process of migration, as described by Lopez Rodriguez (2010) is usually a time of personal upheaval marked by precariousness, change and exertion. However, the act of searching for a "normal" life for most migrants is worth the risk. Therefore, this time of disruption also brings with it hope for a better tomorrow that emboldens migrants to face the time of jeopardy in order to arrive at a period of "normality" they feel is impossible to create in their country of origin.

In order to understand how the interlocutors in this study have positioned themselves in migration utilizing their various forms of capital – cultural, social and economic, it is useful to employ Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of the field, habitus, practice, doxa, capital and social reproduction, in so, arriving at class constitution in migration.

The interlocutors have moved from one field – the labor market field of Croatia, with its particular set of power relations, to the other – the Irish labor market. Aleksandra's quote illustrates how most of the interlocutors describe the Croatian field: "hopelessness in terms of a lack of opportunities in Croatia, disappointment with the system that relies less on merit and more on connections and despair when it comes to future prospects". Hugo also underlined a lack of

9 **PPS number** - Personal Public Service number is a unique reference number enabling one access to social welfare benefits, public services and information in Ireland (https://www.gov.ie/en/service/12e6de-get-a-personal-public-service-pps-number/).

flexibility and opportunities in Croatia, similarly to many other interlocutors in this thesis, saying: "the situation in Croatia is simply that you have to agree to all kinds of [working] conditions because the chances of finding another job are really slim".

While in the process of improving their own lives, the migrants implicitly expressed that they are "buying" into and are continually perpetuating a common European discourse about the superiority of Western Europe as compared to Eastern. The Irish field is described by most of the interlocutors as superior to the Croatian one in terms of working conditions, employment opportunities and remuneration for work. For example, Sara encapsulates the differences between power relations and employment conditions in Croatia vs. Ireland stating:

> "the work environment [in Ireland] is just much more pleasant. I mean, in the Balkans when someone is the boss, they think - oh, I am in charge here and I can do whatever I want, yell at and humiliate the workers and get away with it, while in Ireland that is not the case – workers' rights are well-respected".

The interlocutors are actors in two different fields who ultimately seek to obtain appraisal for their particular forms of capital in the destination country that they were unable to attain in their country of origin. However, symbolically, the actors and the fields are not considered equal. A particular discourse has been outlined by Melegh (2007) who claims that migrants position themselves, and are, likewise positioned by others along a descending scale from "civilization to barbarism" (from "developed to non-developed"). This discourse of symbolic hierarchy, in which migrants are entangled in and influenced by, has an impact on the habitus and practice of the Croatian migrants in Ireland. They treat Ireland and the Irish as developmentally superior to Croatia, and themselves, conversely, as inherently inferior. This particular discourse, can, in turn, inform their individual habitus and determine their practice shaping their migration path.

The individual habitus upon migration (barring the collective habitus of all the interlocutors based on their shared characteristics) is, however, different for each migrant. It can be argued that this difference had an impact on the interlocutors' particular migration path and how they utilized their qualifications and abilities – their practice in the new labor market. For example, Mia had a distinctly positive experience in Ireland possibly owning to a specific habitus. Moving to Cork alone after obtaining a job transfer from Germany (where she worked briefly) she describes the move; she was guided by a particular habitus that can be inferred:

> "I can't say that I had any bad experiences settling. But maybe that's because of [...] I've already lived in other countries, so I kind of was aware of what to expect. But again, I really got lucky with everything, but also, a part of me getting lucky was the fact that I kind of knew some of the things to expect".

Aleksandra, who similarly to Mia, managed to adjust well to Ireland and obtain a job to her satisfaction, when asked (prior to migrating to Ireland), if she believed that it would be possible to find employment in her field, she responded affirmatively, explaining: "I figured - I have my degree, my English is good-enough, I have no issues in terms of papers since I'm an EU citizen [so] it should be possible". Relying on her cultural capital consisting of her educational capital – her diploma as well as her linguistic capital – her knowledge of English, her particular habitus which enabled her to persist in practice of the job search and eventually to find suitable employment in her field.

On the other hand, some migrants, like Karlo, were guided by a distinctly different habitus. Regarding the question of what he wanted to accomplish in Ireland, Karlo explains:

> "I didn't much think about this before the move, I just wanted to leave Croatia. But looking back on all the stories I heard about people who have moved to Ireland, not just from Croatia, but from other places as well, most people, no matter how qualified they are, end up in jobs that are basic and for which you don't need any kind of a qualification. So, in a sense, I knew, or assumed that I would also end up in such a job, which did happen in the end - I got a job as a housekeeping attendant in a hotel."

Karlo's experience was informed by a particular habitus which, likewise, influenced his practice – the position that he took in migration. Instead of attempting to find a job in line with his interests or qualifications, he settled for a job he assumed immigrants like him are likely to obtain. Although habitus cannot be singled out as the only factor in shaping of one's life path, it can be assumed that it does play a significant role as it shapes one's assumptions about the world, his/her place in it and the possibilities one, therefore, is motivated to pursue, in turn, forming one's practice.

Therefore practice - what each of the interlocutors actually did, as well as position-taking - how they strategized to employ their various forms of capital greatly differed affecting each migrants' path. Aleksandra (cited above) utilized several aspects of her cultural capital (in particular - her university diploma, as well as knowledge of English) in order to attain a job in her field and further – to advance in her career. Others, such as Agata, Nena and Marta managed to capitalize on only a part of their cultural capital – their linguistic capital. All obtained employment at a call center in the French language, a job which engaged their linguistic capital helping them to secure a somewhat better-than average pay for a call center job specifically because they worked in a language other than English.

Others relied on their social capital obtained by the virtue of belonging to the migrant community of Croats in Ireland. Several of the interlocutors said that they obtained information

about migration as well as help and advice through social media and social networks of Croats in Ireland.

Agata, for example, managed to acquire employment from Croatia having obtained assistance from a person she met on the Facebook group "Let's go to Ireland" ["Idemo u Irsku"], a Facebook group for Croats that provides general information and fosters discussion for people that hope to move to Ireland. Agata says: "actually, a girl who was from Croatia who was working in Ireland referred me for a position at her company, so I got a job even before I moved there which made the whole process much easier".

Toni spoke generally about the Facebook groups for Croatian immigrants to Ireland saying they were very helpful when moving and settling:

> "the Facebook groups were a lot of help […] 'Croats in Cork' ['Hrvati u Corku'], for example, for my latest move. And 'Let's go to Ireland' ["Idemo u Irsku"], that's the biggest Croatian Facebook group I think actually for going to Ireland. And, the group has actually a lot of content".

Being able to obtain information, draw help or solace drawing on connections to other Croatian migrants in Ireland can be considered social capital of the interlocutors of this study. This unofficial and loosely assembled, yet essential resource serves as an informal network predicated on solidarity and mutuality produced by the shared experience of migration and common nationality in a specific field of action.

All, to a greater or lesser extent used what economic capital they possessed in order to conduct their move to Ireland. However, several commented on the precarious experience that the very limited economic capital they migrated with afforded them shaping their migration path. For example, Aleksandra stated that "it was very stressful while looking for a job because you think you won't be able to find it, and what then" explaining further that since she came to Ireland with very limited funds (like the majority of the interlocutors interviewed), she was forced to find any type of employment quickly or be forced to return to Croatia. This sentiment was repeated by several other interlocutors (Karlo, Hugo and Sara).

Nena elaborates on the connection between the attitude upon arrival of some migrants predisposing them towards low-skilled employment, however she disregards the aspect of economic capital (or lack thereof) that migrants come with which impels many to settle on any type of employment fast in order to survive:

> "I mean, it's not even that impossible maybe [to find a job in one's profession], but we [migrants] have all been sort of conditioned to look for simpler jobs only in order to find

> something as fast as possible instead of maybe taking our time and seeing what is out there".

Yet, it is important to note that experience of migration cannot be reduced solely to the currently attained socioeconomic positioning of the migrant, as there are various other aspects in terms of quality of life, improved future prospects, sense of freedom and accomplishment, opportunities and experiences gained, maturation experienced, people met, etc. that contribute to the particular way in which a migrant might evaluate their experience of migration. Indeed, various interlocutors evaluate their experience on more factors then their economic success.

For example, Aleksandra managed to easily adapt to the Irish society expressing high life satisfaction. She evaluates her overall experience thus: "Yeah, I do think my life turned out much better and of higher quality here than it would have back in Croatia. I think I am actually able to have the kind of lifestyle here that suits me best, whereas in Croatia things are pretty limited".

Bernard, even though he ultimately plans to return to Croatia because he does not like the Irish lifestyle nor the opportunities offered, nonetheless says that he is happy that he undertook the journey having experienced a life in a new country, met different people he would have never meet in Croatia and saved money.

These experiences bespeak of a more wholesome appraisal of the overall experience of migration, one not reduced to mere economic success/failure. By expressing and negotiating their overall experiences through the interviews, the migrants are attempting to make sense of their lives in migration; as per Eastmond (2007), they are creating a coherent life story. These narratives, likewise, become important for what they can reveal about the individuals themselves – the "experiencing subjects" (Eastmond 2007). The way they tell their story, the meanings they ascribe to their experiences, the phrases that they use and the focus they give to particular parts of their narratives all form a representation of their experience revealing how the actors "make sense of their world" (Eastmond 2007).

5.4.2 Social integration and life satisfaction

The concept of differentiated embedding (Ryan 2017), which explains integration as an ever-changing process by which migrants constantly negotiate their bonds in different settings, can be utilized in order to understand social integration of the migrants in this study. The example of variations in social integration is utilized as one of the key determinants in migrants' feelings of life satisfaction.

Several interlocutors in this research (Aleksandra, Agata, Mia, Nena, Marta) remarked that their feelings of belonging in their new setting grew in proportion to the social connections made.

For example, Nena describes her social integration and the impact this had on her happiness with life in Ireland overall:

> "The speed with which I integrated and made friends really surprised me. I am usually a bit introverted, especially at first, so I thought that it would take some time to make friends, but it all actually happened very quickly and spontaneously and now I am really happy with everything here, especially with my friend circle".

Conversely, other interlocutors expressed profound feeling of dissatisfaction with their life in Ireland, as well as a noticeable lack of close social bonds. For example, Hugo says it was difficult to integrate socially since "everyone works these absurd shifts and it takes forever to coordinate schedules and find time to actually meet". Hugo chose to leave Ireland after only three months expressing feelings of deep discontentment.

Karlo is likewise, unhappy, stating that he does not see himself in Ireland long-term primarily due to his lack of social integration: "so I have a feeling that even though I am constantly meeting new people and I have many acquaintances, everything is sort of reduced to this superficial level […] There's no high-quality relationships in my life really and I miss that aspect".

Although the presence of (high-quality) social bonds, or their lack, cannot be directly correlated to feelings of integration, as many factors (job satisfaction, housing situation, temperament, etc.) besides are involved, from the modest sample of the participants in this study, it does nonetheless appear that social embeddedness was strongly correlated to feelings of belonging and societal integration (or lack thereof). Interlocutors who expressed satisfaction in terms of their social relationships in Ireland in this study (Aleksandra, Agata, Mia, Marta, Nena, Toni) were likewise the interlocutors that expressed happiness with their experience in Ireland, even if they found themselves deskilled, which suggests that the quality of social bonds is one of the most important factors in migrants' integration. On the other hand, absence of (high-quality) social bonds, as in the example of Hugo and Karlo, led to feelings of isolation contributing to a lack of integration into society and, ultimately, to dissatisfaction with life in Ireland.

5.4.3 Differences between Ireland and Croatia

Aleksandra enthusiastically talked about Ireland in her interview, citing, in particular the Irish economic standard. She subsequently contrasted Ireland with how she perceives Croatia; when asked if she would ever consider returning there, Aleksandra expressed reluctance citing various reasons: limited career prospects, Croatian mentality, which she deems overly negative, traditional and inflexible, as well as inhospitable work culture.

Hugo emphasizes a lack of satisfaction with the amount and quality of cultural content on offer in Ireland saying: “Ireland doesn’t offer much in terms of culture”. Nena echoes Hugo in saying: “there isn’t that much cultural content [in Ireland] – not many art exhibits, theater plays and all of that, which was a big part of my everyday life in Croatia. So this is disappointing”. Statements of Hugo, Nena as well as several others (Sara, Karlo, Marta) point to the middle-class interests and appetites of this group of migrants; pursuits linked not just to bare survival in their new land, but aspirations for something more; a desire to live comfortably and to integrate fully. In showing concern not just with meeting of day-to-day needs, but declaring a wish to fully engage in the culture and society of their new land, they instead express a wish to thrive.

Marta, like many others, stresses the difference between labor market conditions in Croatia vs. Ireland which affords her the freedom and opportunity to explore career-wise, instead of settling for a job she does not like. However, when it comes to the overall quality of life beyond economic conditions, Marta, as well as other interlocutors, subvert the discourse of superiority of the West (in this case, of Ireland) by referencing other lifestyle aspects which are, in their view, superior in Croatia – such as the better cultural offer, the depth and irreplaceable quality of relationships (with family, in particular), nicer weather and the positive aspects of Croatian mentality.

There appears to be a marked difference by some of the participants between the ideas of “home” vs. “abroad” which can, to some extend, be connected to opposing representations of “homeland” vs. “abroad” studied by Gardener (1993) on the example of migrant villagers in Sylhet, Bangladesh. To the villagers the term “homeland” represents a place of spirituality/religiosity and belonging, while “abroad” indicates a place of economic and material abundance. Gradner also describes the representation of “homeland” as the spiritual and emotional root of a person, but, nonetheless, a place where advancement is impossible making migration a necessity; this discourse can, as well, be noticed in the accounts of Croatian migrants.

The migrants in my research, similarly to the villagers in Gardner’s study, make a distinction between the notions of “homeland”, which signifies a place of familiarity, comfortableness and belonging that Ireland has not yet (and perhaps never will) become vs. “abroad”, in this case Ireland, a place of economic prosperity and broader possibilities. However, the two accounts, although overlapping in the components of familiarity and sense of belonging around the idea of “home”, depart in their relationship and the value placed on the aspect of spirituality/religiosity likewise connected to the notion of “home”. Most participants in this thesis have emigrated with the express intent of detaching themselves from what they deem as overly traditional and rigid societal structures (one of which is the Catholic church in Croatia). Hence, they

express a negative connotation toward the religiosity aspect that the idea of "home" conjures therefore fostering an ambivalent relationship to it.

5.5 Identity and personal development

Many narratives described the process of migration in terms of the impact it had on their identity and personal development. Most interlocutors emphasized a personal transformation in terms of their identity presenting themselves as more socialized individuals post-migration. Likewise, many interlocutors emphasized that the full entry into adulthood (and the consequently radical and rapid evolution of their identity) was facilitated by the very act of migration, imbuing the experience with additional value.

5.5.1 Identity change and personality development

Aleksandra, while talking about integration, said that her move to Ireland enacted a positive change in personal opinions and lifestyle:

> "I think the surroundings you live in also shape you in a way, for example Ireland. I would most likely not become a vegetarian had I stayed in Croatia because the choice of food there [for vegetarians] is terrible. For example, every time we go to a restaurant when we visit Croatia, we have a problem".

However, the change she experienced is met with suspicion and disapprobation from friends and family in Croatia. She says that she now notices an increasing distance between them and herself: "I am a vegetarian now, for example, but every time I go back to Croatia, people give me snide remarks".

Bernard, even though he decided to return to Croatia in the near future, claims that his experience in Ireland was nonetheless positive. Due to an abundance of jobs in Ireland, he felt bolder and more empowered in the workplace which enabled him to act according to what he felt was right. Reflecting on his personal development, he explains:

> "because here you have some kind, let's say safety regarding jobs, like those low-paying jobs, so you can risk and try for some things that you wouldn't be able to ask in Croatia in workplaces […] to give your opinion. You know that even if you lose your job, you'll find another next day, so you've got some strength to do some things that you wouldn't be able to do in Croatia and you get a little bit assertive".

He explains that the experience in Ireland also helped him better understand his values which prompted his decision to return to Croatia: "when you move to another country and you

realize when you are all alone and that you miss all those birthdays and family gatherings and family trips. And you're alone here earning money, you see that money isn't everything".

Marta states that she consciously went into the process of migration in order to gain new experiences that, she felt, were unattainable in Croatia and consequently attain personal maturation: "I was hoping to just kind of like make most out of it really, for my personal growth. I also feel like I grew as a person and my interests have expanded. In order to survive, to fit in, I had to become more extroverted, whether I liked it or not".

Toni says that moving to Ireland has had a very positive affect on his well-being and personal development by pushing him to embrace a more open attitude and behavior in order to better adapt to his new environment: "because usually I'm a very shut-in person, but I tried to be more open, so willingness to learn, willingness to adapt to new environments helped, like I said, I think I've grown and changed as a person".

Most migrants in this thesis divide their narratives in two sequential, yet distinct parts. They emphasize the contrast between their previous self (pre-migration) and the current self (in migration) describing a self-evolution potentiated by migration. In discursively constructing their current self as more socialized and evolved, similarly to Ethiopian migrants in the US studied by Weldeyesus (2007), they claim to have been molded into a superior version of themselves – a person who is better aware of their own values, has a more balanced personality and has been enriched by the experiences had and the people met in migration.

This discourse of self-development through migration can be likened to the "reflexive project of the self" as explained by Giddens (1991) in which lives and identities are self-forged in a late-modern world dis-embedded from traditional structures and holdings. The migrants in this thesis repeatedly emphasize a conscious wish to part with the more rigid and traditional structures that still placed hold on them in Croatia (the diagnosis of post-traditional late-modern society as given by Giddens does not, therefore, universally hold as Croatia is still very much a country beholden to tradition). Migrants, with the act of migration, commence unencumbered upon the project of forging of their own lives and identities thus becoming independent adults that they could not have been in their own country. They view Ireland as a post-traditional society of the West (though it is also arguable to what extend this holds true) which will allow them the freedom, prosperity and independence to embark upon this "reflexive project of the self" (Giddens 1991).

The discourse of forging of their own life path in the act of migration, a path which will enable self-development, has likewise been deployed by both migrants who were satisfied with the outcome of their migration, as well as the ones who were unhappy in Ireland and have decided to leave the country. This suggests an on-going and wide utility of this discursive tool through which

migrants construct an overarching narrative of self-development giving unitary sense and meaning to their migration journey, irregardless of its outcome. For migrants happy in migration, it justifies their reasoning for emigrating as well as strengthening their resolve not to return; for the unhappy ones it serves as a compensation for having undertaken this less-than-fortunate journey serving as a sort of a psychological consolation prize in the form of self-development. Migration is implicitly understood by the participants in this thesis as an automatic catalyst of self-development. Therefore, for both groups (the happy and the not-so-happy ones), it helps them feel like they are in control of creating a successful outcome of their migration journey because the idea of success has been shifted and expanded to include (and perhaps favor) self-development over mere financial and career success.

5.5.2 Transition into adulthood via migration

Agata, when describing her reasons for leaving the country, gives an account of her thoughts upon finishing university in Croatia. She outlines the experience and sentiments of many young college graduates in saying:

> "Once you're done with your university, then the hunger games begin and you're just kind of like… what the hell am I gonna do now? And you feel like so useless and it just like crushes your self-confidence. Because you spend three, five years studying something and then you end up waiting for May every year to kind of like go and work somewhere in a restaurant until like October, November [here she is describing seasonal work common in Croatia during the summer tourist season]. I was working that summer, before I moved, and I didn't get my salary. Because Croatia".

Invoking the negative aspects of Croatian mentality, she explains that this experience is what ultimately prompted her to leave Croatia. She expresses a sentiment recurrent in other accounts, as well, saying that she started to feel like a real adult only upon moving and making a life for herself: "And you feel much better about yourself because you are like, you know, you are working, you feel like an adult. Nobody is patronizing you, nobody is telling you like what you have to do or like people at work are respecting you". Agata's experience, can be explained with Bourdieu's concept of *illusio;* a varied investment she accorded to each "game" in a particular field she "played" in. In Croatia, her interest in the game dwindled; she described her position in that field as sub-optimal and subjugated in a system that exploits and under-appreciates young, well-educated people. This prompted her to divest from that field and game while attempting to discover a more worthy one elsewhere. Deciding to move to Ireland invigorated her interest in a new game, one played in a more just field thus imbuing it with a novel *illusio.* Agata's experience is a micro

example that can be applied to the narratives of most of the informants, as they are all, in a sense, gambling with their future by engaging in migration.

Marta likewise connects the transition to adulthood with the act of migration to Ireland by stating simply: “I feel like a adult here! I can afford stuff and I am not dependent on anybody”.

Other interlocutors in this research too expressed that they were unable, due to financial constrains, to become independent in Croatia, continuing to live with their parents well into their 20s. This is, unfortunately, a very common occurrence, as young Croats are at the very top of the European average when it comes to still living with their parents past the age of 30 (Ilišin & Spajić Vrkaš 2017). This generates feelings of infantilization in many; the belief that they are not “real adults”. Delayed entry into adulthood lingered until they emigrated and were only then able to become self-sufficient; an occurrence, they state, was solely possible through the act of migration. Karlo elaborates:

> “our teenager years have been prolonged and did not end at 19 or 20 like normally, and this trend is really common now considering the situation in Croatian society. We have prolonged our educations and weren’t able to find jobs, so we lived with our parents...and only in our 30s did we really become adults”.

However, for Karlo, true adulthood is imagined further ahead in the future or is possibly, unattainable, even in Ireland:

> “I can’t really say that I feel like an adult here either. I mean, yes I have a job, I pay for things on my own, but I can only afford to rent out a room and not my own place, so I live with a bunch of strangers and don’t have that much freedom and independence to live the way I want. I still feel like I lack autonomy.”

It can be argued that the majority of the interlocutors in this research are experiencing what Arnett (2006) has termed “emerging adulthood”; a period of life characterized by exploration, self-examination, maturation and a lack of stability. Arnett asserts that the age range of emerging adults can be placed roughly between the ages of 18-25. However, his research, primarily conducted in the USA, has not taken into account the structural factors shaping the lives of youth in countries in transition such as Croatia which, I would argue, has prolonged the age range of emerging adulthood well past 25. Most interlocutors of this study, due to the lack of opportunities, unfavorable economic conditions and structural failings of society, have not fully attained adulthood by any of the traditional measures (obtaining independence from parents, finding stable employment, getting married/having children) nor have they had the chance to experience “individualization” (Beck 1992), that is, forging of their own life path, until they moved to Ireland. The majority of interlocutors in this research found obtaining of adulthood impossible, having experienced little in

the way of freedoms and independence that it (at least in western countries) typically offers and one they aspire to. Thus constrained in their ability to explore, many have been stuck in a period of prolonged adolescence only attaining nascent adulthood with the act of migration. Having been able to finally emerge into adulthood, they are experiencing it as a dynamic period of exploration, adventure and discovery reflected in changing of jobs, homes, partners and friends, but on a deeper level, undergoing of a rapid process of self-discovery unfettered by parents or rigid societal structures.

5.6 Experiences in the labor market

Croatian migrants hoped to attain a better estimation of their particular forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986) in Ireland than they were able to attain in Croatia exchanging them for improved socioeconomic status and conditions in their new field of action - Ireland. Indeed, upward social mobility (or, at least, class maintenance) are often primary motivating factors for migration.

Some interlocutors were, indeed, successful in transferring their particular forms of capital to their new field of action of Ireland having consequently experienced upward social mobility. However, many were not so successful, grappling with deskilling. For some, this was a temporary experience related to their first employment opportunities in the country and a stepping-stone towards more rewarding employment situations; but for others deskilling became the dominant part of their migration narratives.

Mia is one of only two of the interlocutors in this research, along with Aleksandra, that obtained a job in her field, and thus did not face deskilling. When it comes to work contentment Mia says that she is very satisfied, owning both to an extremely professional environment, as well as various opportunities for advancement: “back in Croatia, I was always under stress and I was always worried that I have done something wrong. But that’s not the case here. I actually see the value of my work and I see that it’s appreciated”.

Aleksandra’s narrative exemplifies a steadily upward-moving career trajectory. When she first came to Ireland, she found a job in a relatively short time span. However, this first job was waitressing in a restaurant, a job in which she was deskilled. She describes her further experience: “at the time, I was working in a restaurant for 6 or 7 days a week and every day after work I would send job applications for jobs in my field. After three months, I got some positive feedback finally”. She has eventually found employment in her field (economics) and is currently very happy with her job having obtained several promotions (to the position of a manager). She also undertook

additional training in accounting (ACCA qualification[10]) which she is currently in the process of completing.

Agata's situation was somewhat different than many other Croats who move to Ireland to settle down; her goal was only to work there for a year in order to save up money to continue her studies in the UK. Agata obtained employment at a call center in the French language, a job for which her diploma was unnecessary (however, her knowledge in French necessary). She explains that she did not feel resentful over being overqualified understanding it solely as a way to make money during that particular year.

Karlo has a more negative opinion when it comes to the labor market in Ireland and his prospects there as an immigrant: "when you're an immigrant and you don't know anyone and don't have a lot of money, you're just not in a position to be picky with jobs". Although his job as a housekeeper at a hotel did lead to deskilling for Karlo, he eventually obtained a promotion to the position of a housekeeping manager. However, this is still not a job he is satisfied with nor one in his field (MA in History), so he hopes that he will better his chances at finding employment by completing additional courses at an Irish university. Karlo hopes that this new qualification obtained in Ireland will eventually lead to employment in his field.

Marta, like several other interlocutors in this research, works at a call center in Cork. She says that, although this is not her ideal job or one in her field, she is nonetheless satisfied. However, her response to the question of whether she has attempted to find employment in her field seems predicated on the claim that the degree she has (BA in Art History and French language), since not in STEM, is essentially useless:

> "no one has actually asked me to see my bachelor's degree…ever. And I've changed jobs like a couple of times, so yeah, that's like…it's just…like unless you're in a very specific field, which I wasn't to start with […] Art History and French isn't going to be essential anyway, it's not STEM[11]".

Marta's response reveals her habitus prior to the job search grounded in a limiting and defeatist attitude regarding her employment options which might have had an impact on the actual employment outcome. In discounting the possibility of finding employment in her field, she seems to inherently settle for the idea that a job in a call center is the best that she can obtain; a similar mentality, expressed in different ways, was likewise found in the narratives of other interlocutors in

10 **ACCA** - Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, an international accountancy body recognized worldwide establishing ability in all aspects of business (https://opentuition.com/acca/what-is-acca/).

11 **STEM** - an approach to learning and development that integrates the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (https://www.education.wa.edu.au/what-is-stem).

this study. Whether such a pessimistic and devaluing attitude in regard to degrees in humanities and social sciences is based in reality remains an interesting and relevant question, but one overly broad for the scope of this thesis.

Nena expressed similar sentiments to Marta and Karlo in regards to her career expectations for Ireland and value of her degree there: "I wasn't even trying to find a job in my profession since I was aware in advance that it's not gonna happen. I mean, a job for social science people is generally hard to find anywhere, so when I was coming here, it's not something I was trying to do". Speaking about deskilling that migrants often experience, she gives the example of her own experience:

> "before I moved here, I mean… I think most people are ready to, in a way, swallow their pride. Like the first job that you try to find is most likely not going to be anything spectacular, at least that was the case for me. I was willing to take a job that I most likely never would back home. I knew that coming here would most likely be a step back professionally".

Nena is still currently working at a call center, a job that, she says "is one of the easiest jobs to find, so many migrants do it". However, she has progressed from customer service to a mentoring/education role of other employees, a position she says suits her better. Even though she still feels over-educated for her job and that it does not align with her profession (Art History), Nena says that she is nonetheless satisfied: "for the first time, I have some level of stability and safety here that I never had in Croatia. I also have benefits, so professionally I am satisfied".

However, Nena also says that the deskilling has affected her self-perception, especially in relation to people back home:

> "I mean yeah, this [being over-educated] does affect how you see yourself, even though I did not think of it beneath me to work at such a job especially cuz I knew that this is only temporary, I would still feel kinda weird, especially when talking about my job with people back home. I would feel very uncomfortable in explaining what I do. I mean some of my friends from university are now working in their field – working in museums or as professors or researchers, so I really don't feel like telling them about what I do".

Some migrants experience, as per Nowicka (2014b), Kelly and Lusis (2006) and Kelly (2012), "elevated cultural capital" by having moved to a western country in which they are able to forge a living. However, others are faced with a downward move in their social status having found themselves in low-skilled jobs in which they are deskilled. Migrants, like Nena, who have faced deskilling in the destination country express reluctance to speak about their jobs with the people

"back home" claiming to experience shaming and judgment about their choices and consequently - a lowering of social status in their home country.

Toni describes his employment experience in positive terms: "everything has been going really well. I've been failing upwards". He describes his career trajectory in Ireland:

> "when I first got to Dublin I was searching for a job within my field like translating, proofreading, quality control or something like that. Ummm…that's…didn't work, so I took a job at a warehouse, so basically, I would take actually anything. I worked there for three months I'd say, and then I got this job [as a customer service agent]. It's not, again, it's not in my field, but it's a more comfortable job, so for now I'm happy with it and even though it's not in my field, as long as I'm happy at my work, I'm okay with this".

While some migrants have managed to utilize their educational or linguistic capital to obtain jobs that correspond to their educational and skill level, many had difficulties in doing so, only being able to gain employment in low-level jobs and consequently experiencing deskilling.

Toni mirrors some of the other interlocutors in this research (Nena, Marta, Karlo, Agata) who have experienced "contradictory class mobility" (Salazar Parreñas 2000) – a simultaneous increase and decrease in social status in migration. Although employed in low-skilled jobs, most say they nonetheless have better working conditions in Ireland and are making considerably more money than they would have in Croatia (even in skilled jobs), hence their improved economic prospects shine a positive outlook on their migration experience eclipsing the downward motion in their social status (due to having experienced deskilling). However, some migrants were nonetheless dissatisfied with their position in Ireland.

Bernard, for example, has a negative outlook on the employment situation in Ireland. While he hoped to get a job in his field, he was without much luck. The first job he obtained was through an employment agency which was not interested in his qualifications or his work experience from Croatia, instead placing him at a low-skilled job (waiter), a job with a shortage of workers in Ireland. By using an employment agency to obtain work in Ireland, Bernard has unintentionally positioned himself away from the prospect of obtaining skilled employment, as most of the agencies focus on professions with a labor shortage, in other words, jobs that are poorly paid and have unpleasant working conditions. As explained by Nowicka (2012), by using employment agencies to find work, many highly qualified migrants will instead find themselves in low-wage, precarious employment.

Bernard further elaborated on his attempts to find more suitable employment expressing doubts about the prospect of social mobility usually inherently promised by migration:

> "I tried to find a job in my field, but the problem is whenever I applied for those kinds of jobs, they don't take my application because I don't have Irish experience. No matter that you have like experience in international companies, basically, they don't care. They care only if you have Irish experience […] those low-earning jobs nobody wants to do, especially not the home people, the Irish people, so basically, these jobs are reserved for immigrants. But if you want to get some well-earning job, a proper job in your field of study, it's pretty hard".

Having lived in Ireland for more than two years, Bernard is unsatisfied with his prospects and the lifestyle Ireland offers, so he decided to return to Croatia.

Hugo shares Bernard's dispirited sentiments in regards to Ireland describing his brief employment experience there as disappointing. He says that he applied to a multitude of jobs, however, he did not get a lot of responses. Eventually, however, he did find employment in a warehouse packing fruit, which he accepted, despite being a history teacher by profession. He eventually had a plan to enroll into a programming course, however this never came to pass since he was vastly disappointed in the quality of life in Dublin and decided to leave.

Sara changed several jobs. Most were related to customer service and were not related to her qualification (BA in International relations) which, she says, was very disappointing. However, she nonetheless claims: "in comparison to Croatia, I think there is more options for jobs and I also think that the work environment is more positive. The workers have more rights", echoing the sentiments of other interlocutors.

It might seem paradoxical that migrants, coming from countries with diminished opportunities for qualified employment, would, after the challenge and the risk that is faced by the act of migration, be willing to settle for low-wage jobs that do not correspond to their qualifications or aspirations in the destination country. However, there are a multitude of reasons which might explain this phenomenon. Some of these can be reduced to the pull factors of the destination country which provides better overall labor market conditions: more employment opportunities, higher wages, better working conditions, hope for future career advancement and the opportunity of acquiring international employment experience.

However, there are also various other explanations that delve deeper into the phenomenon of deskilling itself. Mentioned by at least a few of the interlocutors in this research, most prevalent reasons for experiencing deskilling are difficulty in validating their qualifications in the new labor market because of non-domestic qualifications or a lack of local professional experience that employers prefer as well as discrimination and stereotyping which disadvantages the non-Irish (lack of national capital). Additionally, there are also circumstantial reasons that limit migrants from being in the position to attain more suitable employment like insufficient financial freedom (limited

economic capital) and not enough time both of which are required for a more discriminant job search (forcing several participants in this thesis to accept any type of job fast in order to survive).

Deskilling can also result from the resources migrants use in searching for work. Some utilize their social networks and word-of-mouth in attempting to find jobs relying on their social capital. Yet since their social networks tend to primarily encompass new migrants from the same region who are themselves in entry-level/low-skilled positions, their social capital is limited as most of the jobs that their contacts are able to recommend (them for) are likewise low-level. A resigned attitude when it comes to their chances of finding suitable employment reflected in several of the interlocutor's statements (Bernard, Karlo, Nena, Marta, Hugo) indicates their conviction that their non-STEM and non-Irish degree and experience is essentially useless; such an attitude can also play a role in the chances of an individual on the labor market, in this case demotivating one from persisting in the search for more a suitable job perpetuating their experience of being deskilled.

Nonetheless, some migrants were able to affirm their skills and qualifications on the Irish labor market and, to some extent, mitigate their experience of deskilling. They have done this in various ways: by accumulating work experience (Nena, Marta, Toni) or completing of additional courses/degree programs in Ireland which made them more appealing and "legitimate" to Irish employers (Aleksandra, Karlo). Others have broadened their social networks over time which boosted their social capital providing them with more opportunities or have advanced by sheer persistence in their job search (also Aleksandra). Still, others employed an additional strategy to understand their migration experience – they have utilized the transnational perspective.

5.7 The transnational perspective

Migrants in this thesis, to various degrees, employ the transnational perspective, both when constructing their own narratives and while reflecting on their own experience in migration, as well as when relating to others and when navigating their future prospects.

5.7.1 Emotional transnationalism

Many still have family and friends back home with whom they remain close and are in constant contact with, therefore emotionally existing in both spheres of "home" and of "abroad". Situation is additionally complicated for some who have, in addition to Croatia and Ireland, lived in other countries and have retained emotional ties there, as well.

Agata says that she has emotional connections in various parts of the world:

> "when it comes to my family we have like a family group, and we are just like always talking within the group. My mom is still in Croatia, but she's also kind of like you know, playing with the idea of maybe going to Germany, because my brothers are in Germany. I have one of my best friends, you know, some of them are still in Croatia, but they are planning to either to move, or they already moved, so one of my best friends is in Paris, another one is like in Spain, another one is planning to go to Amsterdam, so you know, we're basically everywhere".

Bernard, similarly to other interlocutors (Karlo, Nena, Mia), describes efforts at maintaining intense emotional bonds with family transnationally; emotional closeness and intensity in communication are enabled, to a great extent, by relatively novel technologies of mobile phones, ubiquitous Internet access and messaging apps: "when we moved to Ireland, we actually made a WhatsApp group with our family members and basically shared all things that happened here. So, let's say we are in the text contact every day".

Hugo makes a broader point by reflecting on the relative ease of migration in the current day and age afforded by new technologies:

> "I mean to move today… it's not the same as it was back in the day when you were not able to maintain contact with anybody cuz phone calls were expensive, letters take forever. So you don't really have the possibility to maintain contact that much. Today it's like really easy, you can communicate with anybody at all times. So I was in contact with them [family and friends] always".

However, Aleksandra, who has been in Ireland the longest (6 years), says that over time, the contact with everybody but her closest family has significantly decreased: "I used to Skype with all of my friends all the time, but not anymore. I don't even know my Skype password now". Her statement is in line with what Ryan (2017) has noticed while studying Poles who have been in the UK for a longer time (a decade or more) explaining that, although new technologies do facilitate transnational contact, "long distance relationships do not remain frozen in time but may alter through the life course as needs and responsibilities change" (Ryan 2017:2). Since Aleksandra has, out of all of the participants in this thesis, been in Ireland the longest, she has experienced what others yet haven't but, perhaps, will in time – a gradual alteration of most transnational relationships (in spite of the possibilities afforded by today's technology).

5.7.2 Double space of reference and agency

In constructing their narratives by comparing their current circumstances to the situation of their peers in Croatia, as well as comparing their former self (before the move) to their current self, interlocutors utilized a double space of reference and agency. This double space of reference and

agency is usually deployed to construct, by comparison, a more positive image of one's current self in migration in order to justify the act of migration, to imbue it with meaning (as per Aleksandra, "it led to my self-development") as well as to gain approval of distant others.

For example, Aleksandra compares her situation in Ireland to that of her friends in Croatia saying: "many of my friends back home have graduated from a similar or same program as mine [economics], but what they do now is... I mean, you do not need a degree for it, for the jobs that they do [and] none of them seem happy". Comparing her gratifying employment situation with the one of her friends back home, Aleksandra says: "I have not really heard from a lot of people back home that they like their job, it's kind of unheard of". With this, she is justifying her act of emigration, having asserted continually that her job is one of the strongest motivators for her decision to stay in Ireland.

Mia emphasized independence afforded to her by the financial power gained in Ireland while contrasting it with her situation in Croatia: "it's incomparable [...] I had to think about every single thing [in Croatia], but my status here is very satisfactory. Like, I don't need to think about what I want to buy, where I want to travel and I can still save up".

Concerning her quality of life in Ireland as opposed to Croatia, Nena echoes Mia: "Here [in Ireland] I was pleasantly surprised by the purchasing power – prices of most things, besides rent, are the same or even lower than in Croatia, yet the salaries are much higher." Mia's and Nena's accounts, as well as nearly all other narratives focused on the vast difference in the amount of disposable income available in Ireland, as opposed to Croatia, emphasizing it as an additional motivator to stay in the country. By equating "normality" with being able to easily afford common consumer items, services and experiences, migrants associate respectable life with materialist success. This can be likened to Bauman's (2007) theory of "consumer identities in consumerist cultures" which explains that lifestyles forged around the act of purchasing primarily promote consumerist identities forged by consumption and brand identification, while morality is built around individual interests and economic ability. Consumerist lifestyles are common in capitalist countries such as Ireland in which "a new order has sedimented, one defined primarily in economic terms" (Bauman 2000:4). This order favors private interests, fervent spending and wealth accumulation, often to the detriment of other values (Croatia is, likewise, a capitalist country nowadays, however, possibly due to the fairly recent socialist heritage, the capitalist values are not as apparent nor as entrenched as in Ireland). Therefore, it makes sense that some migrants, perhaps traumatized by financial insecurity, might easily embrace a set of values predicated on wealth accumulation made possible in a more robust economy such as Ireland.

However, most interlocutors, contrary to the prevailing migration narratives, have not outlined remittances as a strong motivator for emigration, nor did they engage in sending of remittances on any regular basis. Hugo, when asked whether he sends money back home, explains: "No and that was not really my motivation for leaving at all. Both of my parents were employed, so it really was not necessary […], there was no one who was dependent on me financially back home".

Marta similarly elaborates on some of her reasons for the move:

> "Saving money for the future yes [was a reason for migration], but I don't send any money home. And I'll give like an occasional gift, but like most of my family is financially okay, at the moment. […] But yeah, essentially, they're all… I was never leaving to take care of them. I wasn't in that sort of a position."

Åkesson (2011), while writing about remittance practices of Cape Verdean migrants, argues that economic gifts often form a crucial part in maintenance and shaping of close social ties. However, the focus placed on exchange of economic gifts and its strong influence on shaping of relationships is somewhat incongruent to my findings and is, perhaps, more applicable to a context where there is a generational normative standard of remittances which form the basis of survival for the receivers. The difference between Åkesson's and my own findings might be in the motivation for migration, as well as the distinctiveness of this cohort of migrants (young, well-educated Croats) – as most of them migrated from middle-class families and middle-class circumstances motivated toward migration by aspirations toward class maintenance or upward mobility, not by circumstances so dire as to put bare survival into question and make remittances a necessity. Although most of the participants in my research did not have the economic means to embark upon adulthood in Croatia nor, did they, due to stagnating economic opportunities, have much hope in becoming independent and leading, by western standards "normal" lives (for example: obtaining employment in their own field, becoming independent from parents, renting/buying their own place, being able to afford common consumer goods and experiences, etc.), they nonetheless did not come from backgrounds that lacked basic means of survival, therefore excluding the acute need for regular remittances to their families. Most expressed that they send money to their close family members only on special occasions, such as birthdays or on Christmas, or for outstanding expenses. For example, Bernard says: "only money we are sending home is for birthdays and only for kids, for our nephews and nieces". The money sent, specifically because it is not considered necessary for day-to-day functioning or sent with any regularity, is therefore, I would argue, mostly divorced

from the moral and relational burdens placed on more regular and indispensable remittances in other contexts (such as Åkesson's).

When asked about his life satisfaction in Ireland, Karlo reduces it exclusively to comparatively better financial situation in Ireland than in Croatia:

> "when it comes to feeling satisfied here, I don't really know. I am happier here with my financial situation since I can afford stuff here that I couldn't back home. But when it comes to the social aspect, I was of course, much happier in Croatia with my friends and family, here I don't really have anyone."

By using double space of reference and agency, Karlo is seemingly attempting to reaffirm his decision to emigrate thereby justifying his continued stay in the country, despite his overall dissatisfaction with his life in Ireland. He also describes oscillations experienced in regards to his sentiments on emigrating from Croatia comparing his situation in Ireland to the one back home: "no matter how angry I am at everything there, I also kind of wish I could have stayed [in Croatia], but taking our mentality into account, I feel really disappointed, but also relieved for not having to be there anymore".

Several accounts similar to Karlo's (Marta, Nena, Toni) marked by the experience of being settled in their migration situation in spite of being deskilled, can be explained by the use of four phases of transnational system of reference and agency outlined (as pertaining to Polish graduates in the UK) by Nowicka (2012). These four phases can easily be transposed to many Croatian graduates in Ireland (and the ones mentioned among the interlocutors in this thesis) as similar migration trajectories, as well as usage of double system of reference and agency, were noticed in the narratives of some of the interlocutors in this thesis.

The first phase is the one prior to migration in which young graduates, influenced by the negative experiences on the domestic labor market and motivated by the idea of better conditions abroad, decide to emigrate. In the second phase, upon the arrival to the destination country, migrants, for various, previously mentioned reasons often take low-skilled yet, in contrast to their homeland, much better paying jobs with opportunities for advancement. They discursively rationalize the absence of professional success by emphasizing incompatibility of their qualifications with the system of the destination country or lack of national qualifications/professional experience that employers prefer. Subsequently, they compare themselves not with the graduates of the destination country, but with the ones back home who work underpaid jobs also not in line with their qualifications. In using a double system of comparison, migrants fair relatively better which forms a useful psychological strategy for easing

the dissatisfaction with conditions encountered upon migration. In the third phase of establishment in the destination country, migrants are attempting to cope with the disappointing conditions of their lives in migration by, again, comparing their situations with the situations of their family and friends back home. Often better overall standard of living in the destination country as well as higher wages outweigh professional stagnation and deskilling they experience in migration persuading them to stay despite dissatisfaction. The forth phase is related to their undetermined future in which migration "becomes for many a durable phase in life" (Nowicka 2012:21). Many migrants are ambivalent about their future plans, unsure if they will stay, return home or move elsewhere, once more, in search of a better life. This "strategy of intentional unpredictability", manifested in, at least theoretically, keeping all future options open is discursively explained as always being prepared for better opportunities.

They, likewise, employ different temporal notions when discussing success and failure by transforming their current uncertainty and dissatisfaction in migration into a possibility of future success, success-to-be. Failure is, therefore, rarely explicitly mentioned, but forever looms in the background of narratives as a perpetual risk. This is closely related to Eastmond's narrative theory which states that meaning is attributed to phenomenon by being experienced while we can only reliably grasp other people's experience from the expressions they assign to them (Eastmond 2007). Thus the narratives migrants build aid them in organizing their experiences while imbuing them with significance and giving them unity. The recreation of the migrants' past through narratives is usually a symbolic strategy which endeavors to address their present situation while also containing their future aspirations.

5.7.3 Transnational space of global possibilities

Most interlocutors have cultivated a mentality which can be characterized as one open to change, forever vigilant of opportunities and always willing to move to yet another place if it offers better chances of success; by remaining in constant state of never being settled, they inherently reside in the transnational space of global possibilities.

Bernard exemplifies the attitude of openness to global possibilities in saying:

> "We decided that we're gonna move here [to Ireland] only temporarily and see how it's gonna go, and after a year or so we are gonna decide what is going to be our next move. Are we gonna stay in Ireland, try to make a new life here or after a few years, move back to Croatia or maybe some other country".

Mia predicates future success on openness to opportunities and flexibility in terms of location emphasizing not just her own, but what she perceives to be a more flexible mindset of most young, well-educated people like herself:

> "I mean like if you look at the group of people in which I would put myself, most of the people speak English pretty well, so, it's not a problem for them to adjust, they're all technically savvy, they all have access to internet, so I think it kind of mirrors through the whole generation. And, this whole generation is kind of the traveling type, so people are aware that they will have to modify their lives in order to get to the level they want to be at".

Similarly to the interlocutors in the study by Shrooten, Salazar and Dias (2015) which describe experiences of transnational migration of Brazilian migrants living in ongoing mobility, the interlocutors in this research have also embraced a mindset of openness to a perpetually mobile existence. Migration used to be considered a linear and unidirectional event that begins with leaving the home country and ends with settling in the destination country. However, many of today's migrants prefer to keep their options open and their paths flexible. No longer limiting themselves territoriality, instead, in order to better their circumstances, they remain unsettled and ever available to better possibilities elsewhere – they are, as per Morokvasic (2004), "settled within mobility".

5.7.4 Liquid modernity

A small number of interlocutors have put emphasis on the more destabilizing aspects of transnationalism – impermanence, constant state of flux, feelings of displacement and precarious existence; what Bauman termed "liquid modernity".

In discussing his difficulty in establishing deeper and more permanent relationships in his new environment, Karlo gives an example that epitomizes what he perceives to be negative and destabilizing effects of liquid modernity:

> "I've met many people here in Ireland who I hit it off really well with, and six months, a year goes by and up! They are leaving! […] you hang out with people and all but you kinda start to count on the fact that people will quickly leave, that they will not stay permanently".

He further states that he does not plan to stay in Ireland long-term, but that he also does not see himself returning to Croatia exemplifying his feeling of being uprooted and uncomfortable in flux that is his experience:

> “I feel like too many things have changed [in Croatia] since I’ve left...people I knew all went their separate ways...it’s like I was ejected from my niche and I can never return...also, there would again be the same economic pressure back home, so I don’t know...I am neither here nor there.”

Liquid modernity, typical in today’s advanced, globalized society is marked by uncertainty, instability, impermanence of relationships, mobility and fluidity (Bauman 2000). For the interlocutors in this thesis, liquid modernity can be observed in the constant changing of jobs, homes, friends and partners, but also, in alteration of the self regarding values, customs and personality; modifications catalyzed by the very act of migration. Some interlocutors have embraced these changes wholeheartedly contentedly living in flux and open to transnational space of global possibilities. Others find such a lifestyle unsettling, yet recognize that since they have extricated themselves from their primary niche of their homeland by the act of migration, they can no longer, perhaps ever again, belong or be settled in the same way - in their locality, in their relationships nor regarding their beliefs. Uprooted and perturbed, their lives have, for better or worse, been thoroughly changed in and because of migration.

6. Conclusion

The primary purpose of this thesis was to examine and analyze narratives of recent migrants from Croatia to Ireland, in particular, by focusing on the cohort of young, well-educated individuals who moved post-accession (July 2013). Their accounts were obtained by the method of semi-structured interviews exploring the themes of integration, experiences in the labor market, personality alterations, as well as their positioning in the transnational space.

Croatia has historically undergone multiple waves of migration, however, the current wave, which started in 2009 and intensified after Croatia joined the EU in 2013, has been particularly intense due to its pace (many left in a short time-span) and permanence (most do not intend to return). It also had significant consequences on the country as a whole, especially on its demography, labor market and systems of social security and retirement. However, there has been very little in the way of research examining this particular migration phenomenon; only a handful of quantitative studies have been found, most likely due to the relative novelty of this migration wave. I have, therefore, sought to address this research gap by gathering and analyzing narratives of young, well-educated Croats in recent migration in Ireland.

Five main topics have been found to be the most prominent in all the interviews; these topics served as axes around which the interlocutors constructed their particular narratives. These are: reasons for leaving Croatia, settling and belonging in Ireland, labor market experiences and identity formation and personality changes in migration. These topics were examined through the lens of narrative theory, theories that explore social reproduction, symbolic power and class constitution as well as the transnational lens.

Young people in this research cited multiple motivating factors which have prompted their decision to leave Croatia and settle in Ireland. While most interlocutors claim that their motivation for moving was not singular, the majority was heavily influenced by one or two main reasons that ultimately led to their move abroad. A vast number of those reasons converged around the subject of economic stagnation and inhospitable labor market conditions in Croatia – scarcity of jobs, especially of suitable and well-paid employment, toxic work culture marked by nepotism, cronyism, mobbing and exploitation and their resigned outlook in terms of future career prospects. Likewise, several interlocutors explained that, due to inopportune financial circumstances, they were forced to live with their parents well into their 20s which severely curtailed their ability to experience freedom, independence and maturation delaying their emergence into adulthood. Attainment of adulthood, therefore, became dependent upon the act of migration. All of the mentioned reasons represent the abnormal conditions in terms of economic circumstances in Croatia which motivated

migrants to seek the establishment of normality in terms of material life conditions by emigrating to another country.

Another prominent reason most interlocutors mentioned was a desire to escape the "Croatian mentality" characterized, in their words, by negativity, backwardness, rigidity and stagnancy. The concept was used by interlocutors when attempting to explain why things will never function well in Croatia discursively depicting emigration as a necessity.

Additionally, a particular collective narrative was observed - the story of Croats' experience of the war, post-war transition period (from socialism to capitalism) and the impact this had on their subsequent life path. These were apparent as default starting points against which the subsequent personal narrative was built (Eastmond 2007). The period of the 1990s in Croatia was experienced as a difficult and disorienting time with many facing trauma, fear, impoverishment and disempowerment. The new generations grew up with anxiety and uncertainty in regards to their future prospects. After finishing university many of those concerns were realized in unemployment or low-paying jobs which prompted many to leave the country.

Others emphasized reasons for the move specifically related to Ireland - the fact that Ireland is an English-speaking country that allows them to live and work there legally. They were also motivated by the promise of better opportunities and conditions offered by the booming economy of Ireland. Some were also drawn by stories from earlier migrants and by a desire for adventure and self-development, while others were inspired to move after learning about positive experiences of other individuals who left for Ireland before them. Ireland is often eulogized in the stories of previous migrants as a place where hard work and ability is inevitably rewarded with success (invoking the concept of a "meritocratic paradise" as per Lopez Rodriguez 2010 and Nowicka 2012). This, in particular, attracts many ambitious individuals seeking a place where they think their hard work and education might be appreciated, unlike in Croatia.

Settling and belonging in Ireland was described differently by each interlocutor, but in examining each persons' narrative, it was possible to glimpse how each individual personally experienced migration. Moving from one field to another (Croatian to Irish labor market), participants differently deployed their various forms of capital – cultural, social and economic, to position themselves in the new labor market. It was found that the particular habitus of each migrant had a distinct impact on one's practice resulting in their positioning in the new labor market, and consequently, their ability to succeed in the new field of action. Ultimately, the extent of their social integration along with their employment satisfaction were the two deciding factors when it comes to their overall happiness in migration.

Almost all participants expressed that they had undergone the process of personal development and maturation in migration. Reflecting on themselves pre- and post- migration, the participants made a clear distinction between the two versions of themselves claiming that the post-migration version is clearly superior – more open, social, ready to tackle challenges, more experienced and worldly. Migration, therefore, served as both a catalyst for change enacting a "reflexive project of the self", while enabling freedom, resources and experiences which made shaping of their own life paths and identities possible. The participants have, likewise, stressed that they were finally able to become self-sufficient in migration, in so, fully emerge into adulthood, which was, for many, not possible in Croatia due to financial constrains.

It was found that the discourse of self-development achieved through the act of migration served an important psychological purpose helping migrants feel in control in circumstances beyond their control. Since migration is usually a precarious and turbulent time in one's life, it is helpful to view it through the prism of internally-derived success (ex. maturation, psychological growth), instead of externally-derived success (ex. attainment of satisfactory employment conditions, high salary). Migration is understood by migrants as an inevitable catalyst of inner change. Therefore, irregardless of whether they managed to reach their external goals of material and career success, social integration and others, migrants were still able to interpret their migration journey as meaningful, successful and justified since, as they claim, it led to self-development and maturation.

Several important findings concerned the experiences of young, well-educated Croats on the Irish labor market. While some participants were successful in converting their particular forms of capital from one field to another (Croatian to Irish labor market), the majority (eight out of ten interviewed) grappled with deskilling. Even so, the problem of deskilling is not strictly individual, but was rather found to be on the intersection of the personal and the structural. Thus, in the case of the migrants in this research, deskilling was found to be directly related to a lack of specific forms of capital needed to advance in the new field of action: difficulty in validating their qualifications in the Irish labor market in the absence of domestic qualifications/a lack of local professional experiences (cultural capital and national capital), insufficient financial freedom and time to look for better jobs (economic capital) and limited social networks (social capital). Yet, deskilling was also the result of a migrant's particular disposition and agency which were found to have a significant impact on their chances at obtaining suitable employment: an individual's habitus colored their assumptions regarding their chances in the labor market which then shaped their particular practice and disposition for action during the job search, as well as their position-taking - how they strategized to take advantage of their various forms of capital.

Even though the majority of the migrants in this study were overqualified for their jobs, most nonetheless, expressed contentment with their position due to more satisfying working conditions and better remuneration for their work in Ireland than in Croatia. This explained, at least in part, why they chose to stay in Ireland in spite of their disappointment in regards to their employment situation. Deskilled, yet still having improved their economic prospects, these individuals have experienced "contradictory class mobility" - a concurrent increase and decrease of social status in migration.

All of the participants in this research, to various degrees, also utilized the transnational perspective in order to maintain distant relationships, construct and evaluate their migration narratives, as well as navigate future prospects.

This cohort of migrants frequently engaged in the transnational social space by actively maintaining emotionally intense bonds with friends and family, not just back home, but also in many countries around the world. This level of transnational emotional engagement was not possible in the past, but today is realized with the help of novel technologies and present ease and affordability of international travel.

Another way migrants expressed transnational orientation was by utilizing multiple contexts which aided them in navigating around the notions of success and failure. By using a "double system of reference and agency" (Nowicka 2014), they obtained an additional biographical asset and a psychological tool assisting them in negotiating achievement by presenting themselves and their path in migration as comparatively successful to their past situation and the situations of distant others (in their home country). This was usually utilized in an attempt to obtain recognition from those distant others, but to likewise, justify and render meaningful their own migration path, irregardless of its outcome.

Many interlocutors in this research also exist in the transnational space of global possibilities – they are mobile, open to new opportunities that might arise and never really permanently settled in their local environment; they are using the "strategy of intentional unpredictability" (Nowicka 2012). However, others decry this constant state of flux described by Bauman (2000) as "liquid modernity". They denounce its more distressing aspects – dislocation, impermanence, precariousness, as well as a lack of meaningful and long-lasting emotional bonds. They find such a fluid lifestyle unsettling, yet recognize that since they have disentangled themselves from their previous niche in their home country by the act of migration, they can no longer feel truly integrated into any society in the same way again. They have, thus, in their view, been profoundly transformed in migration.

Future researchers exploring a similar topic might investigate the differences in outcomes on the labor market between various university majors, as multiple interlocutors in this thesis have indicated a possible devaluation of non-STEM diplomas on the labor market which might be even more apparent in the immigrant population leading to vastly different migration outcomes among different majors.

A divergence in outcomes between male and female migrants might also be a fruitful area of inquiry for, although in this research, a particular difference was not noticed, possibly owning to a small and relatively homogeneous sample size, this might be more apparent with a larger number of participants.

Future studies could also explore (in more depth) the difference in outcomes on the labor market between domestic as opposed to foreign qualification holders as this research points to a divergence of outcomes in these two groups.

By shedding light on the experiences of young, well-educated migrants from Croatia to Ireland, this thesis contributed to the the body of knowledge about migration in several ways. It serves as a current example of EU periphery-to-center migration (covering particularities of this variety of migration such as settling and belonging, deskilling, social integration and transnational orientation). Likewise, by focusing on the specific cohort of young, well-educated migrants and in exploring their personal narratives, this thesis provides insight into how one particular, yet often disregarded group, experiences migration. There are very few studies regarding this topic (Croatia to Ireland migration) and cohort (young, well-educated recent migrants) and almost none which uses qualitative instead of quantitative methods, exploring the phenomenon from the perspective of migrants themselves. I have, therefore, made a contribution to a body of knowledge that, although crucial to the future of Croatia, was conspicuously absent.

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