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# Ethnological Research on Family and Unemployment

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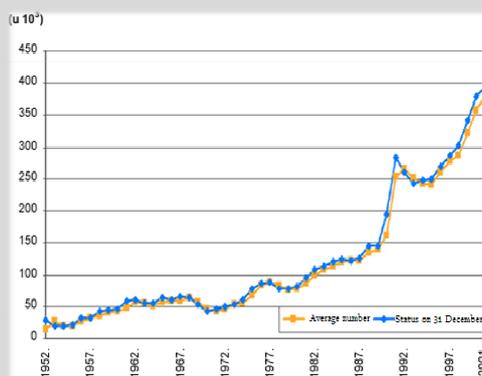
## Political and economic shifts in Croatia since 1990s

Since the early 1990s significant socioeconomic and political changes have occurred that have affected the structure of Croatian labor market. Unemployment, insecurity, a failure to adapt to the new economic value system and its newly re-established relationships and requirements, have all influenced the individual and family life.

### Families' experiences and strategies used

A central theme of the research will deal with questions of individual and family strategies as survival strategies, i.e. how the confrontation with the new financial situation and values has repercussions on everyday life of the family, the questions of personal identity, and self-confirmation.

Statistical (quantitative) analyses from sociology, economics, and public finances bring in relevant knowledge of the overall socioeconomic processes in Croatia. However, they indicate an insufficiency of information about the everyday lives of families and individuals at an empirical level, as well as at the symbolic, emotional, and individual level.



Shifts in the number of unemployed people from 1952 to 2001, based on the average number of unemployed and on the status on 31 December.  
Source: [www.hzz.hr](http://www.hzz.hr), HZZ, 2002b

## Research questions

- Due to diminished and restructured (formal) labor market, drastic changes, and a "crisis" in the Croatian economic system, how have individuals and families re-established a balance in everyday life?
- How have uncertainty, replaceability, and an increase in social inequality affected the lives of families and individuals in Croatian society from the 1990s until today?
- What has happened to families and individuals outside of the formal labor market, i.e. in what ways have long-term formal unemployment and activities in the informal labor market shaped the culture of living and everyday life in Croatia?
- Empirical research shows that the importance and value of gender and generational social categories are significantly defined by just such changes in the labor market (Myles 1990; Robertson 1998; Jackson 1999). That raises the question: what has happened to those categories in the context of mass lay-offs and long-term formal unemployment in Croatia from the 1990s until today?

## Field research

Is primarily aimed at urban context in a number of families who share the experience of long-lasting unemployment (having at least one member of the closer family formally unemployed for a long time starting from the '90s in the 20th century). The families and the individuals will be «selected» on the basis of the criteria of unemployment experience and not on territorial basis. The research will not be limited to a part of the town. Instead, in accordance with the concept of a family as a part of a dynamic and open system, the research will be extended to the complex network of social relationship and interactions.

Ethnological research will put the focus primarily on the qualitative aspects of being unemployed. This will include issues like individual identity (self-assessment, social, family, gender, and generational roles), family influence (family strategies; cooperation, or lack thereof; and conflict), social exclusion (lack of formal working-collective, the formation, or re-formation, of informal social groups), social norms and values (discourse and symbolic levels, cultural significance, political and economic context) and social structures (power relations and «class»).

## Methodological procedures and data analyses

Descriptive, analytic, comparative and interpretative levels, i.e. A combination of archival work at the sources (newspaper articles, statistics, and visual media) and open interviews with elements of observation and participation.

A specific segment of the research work: the researcher's double *insider* position as a *cultural insider* (so-called *anthropology at home*) and a *family insider* (the members of the researcher's closer family will be a part of the collocutors). In a methodological and epistemological sense, the research work will be a continuous self-reflexive process (auto-ethnography).

## Expected scientific contribution

Expansion of the knowledge of the basic relationship between individuals/families and the modern socioeconomic systems of Croatia (through strategies, alternatives, decision-making processes, exclusion, etc.).

A better insight into the state and tendencies of Croatian transitional society, of socioeconomic processes after socialism, and of the transitional period before entering the European Union.

A description of the characteristics of the problem of socialist and post-socialist transformations of informal social, notably family relations, observed through the problem of long-term unemployment in Croatia.



In line for a lunch in front of a public kitchen in Zagreb, September 2008.



Checking job-ads in front of the Croatian Employment Office in Zagreb, March 2008.

   
**Marie Curie Actions**  
Human Resources and Mobility Activity  
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## What have people lost or gained by losing their jobs?



Presentation of a multi level marketing company's products in a family apartment in Zagreb, March 2008.



Collecting repayable plastic and glass bottles from trash containers in Zagreb, April 2008.