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Capital Zagreb Versus Coastal Split: Enduring Tensions Between Capital Cities and Port Second Cities

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ABSTRACT Being on the edge of space and politics, coastal cities (sometimes accompanied by islands) traditionally play second fiddle to larger, urban capital cities, located more centrally in their respective countries' interiors. This paper aims to explore the opportunities and threats faced by coastal cities and their neighbouring islands while rethinking them through the concept of 'the second city'. Today, the status of second(ary) cities is usually constituted in terms of their size, resources, economic, and political power. In the context of maritime second (and secondary) cities, these criteria are further complicated by their peripheral status and 'marginal' role. However, this generic understanding of second(ary) cities is being challenged, thereby enabling much more complex definitions and a multidisciplinary approach. This paper offers a rethinking of how 'the second city' is understood, by analysing the multi-layered relations and ambivalences emerging from the entanglement of historical, cultural, social and economic processes that define coastal cities as second cities. Based on a combination of desk research, discourse analysis of secondary literature and the authors' multi-disciplinarity, experiences and presence in the cities they study, the focus is on how a city's *secondness* is experienced, negoti-

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ated and redefined. After a short but scene-setting overview of first/second city cases and their associated problems, the study engages with the coastal city of Split as Croatia's second city in relation to the (non-coastal) capital, Zagreb. Our aim is to understand what constitutes Split as second city, and how the coastal experience and the cosmopolitan vibe of Mediterranean Split triggers social and cultural processes in which *secondness* is questioned and (re)negotiated. Furthermore, we want to understand how does the changing (in)visibility of Split's urban seascape challenge and override its stigma as Croatia's 'second best' urban settlement.

Key words: capital cities, Croatia, maritimity, port cities, second cities, Split, Zagreb.

1. Introduction: Giving the middle finger to Zagreb?

Visitors to Split, Croatia, are intrigued by an open-air installation that operates like a water fountain, but is suggestive of other motives. Designed by Croatian sculptor Kažimir Hraste, the *Figa i Pirja* fountain, inaugurated in 1998, is a bronze sculpture. Its central feature is the pouring of water from a hand, ensconced in a wall, into a funnel, located at street level. This dynamic combination stands for the continuous flow of life and progress in the city, even in challenging times. The hand, from which the water flows, is a clenched fist, with the thumb positioned between the index and middle fingers (See Figure 1). This particular hand gesture, known as the *figa* sign among locals, represents stubbornness and resilience. The symbolism of this gesture has been described as beautifully reflecting "the spirit of the people during a time of hardship when they were determined to overcome adversity" (GPS My City, 2024).

Figure 1
Figa i Pirja in Marmont Street, Split

However, according to local narratives, there is an additional meaning that is absent from tourist promotion material. Locals have also explained that the hand points towards Zagreb, Croatia's capital city (e.g.: https://4-split-islands.com/marmont-street/). The *figa* gesture has also been described as equivalent to 'giving the middle finger.' Local narratives and sculptural representations of what locals refer to as the "Dalmatian spirit" in the modern era are characteristic in their ambivalence and even conflicting processes. On the one hand, *Figa i Pirja* poses as an interesting travel story and local city attraction, especially for tourists who, in their quest for authentic experiences, recognize it as the Instagram-worthy background and, perhaps, also as a short but plausible explanation of the witty Dalmatian charm and temperament. This goes hand in hand with the popular local belief in the Dalmatian psyche as a sort of humorous, *genius loci*, bearing an anti-heroic and sarcastic mockery against everyone, marked by impulsiveness, hastiness, a laid-back character, superficiality, as well as explosive disposition (Ljubić Lorger, 2015: 8). On the other hand, the kind of sculptural essentialization that Figa i Pirja encapsulates refers to the tight social bonds and moral scrutiny that are known in every small(er) town in Dalmatia. However, in the historic centre of Split, whose intimate social ties in local neighbourhoods disappeared with Airbnb-ization, this symbol of self-flattery may serve more as a reminder of the 'good old times' than of the actual moment. Consequentially, *Figa i Pirja* stands as a reminder of better days, a sort of heritagization that reflects a specific city lifestyle and which now belongs more to the past. Thus, the new meanings that *Figa i Pirja* represent warn us of the shift in (auto)perception in which local stories are overshadowed by antagonisms directed towards Zagreb as the nation's capital.

This should come as no surprise. No one enjoys playing second fiddle. There is no love lost between first and second cities in most of the world's countries and territories. Industrial Zagreb (population: 660,000) and tourism-driven Split (population: 150,000), the capital of the Dalmatia province, are Croatia's first and second cities. The intense rivalry between the two is keenly felt when their respective football teams – Dinamo Zagreb and Hajduk Split – play against each other in the national league. Indeed, the two teams act as "reservoirs for regional identity-building, while violence between their fans is a microcosm for political and economic tensions between Zagreb and Split" (Tsai, 2021: 126). The social, political, economic, and cultural tensions that are mirrored in the football arena have deep historical roots, with the socialist and post-socialist periods serving as the most recent touchstones (Brentin, 2016; Brentin and Zec, 2017). Today, these tensions not only persist but also evolve, indicating the "increased tensions between the north and south of Croatia" (Lalić and Biti, 2008: 261). The long-standing animosities between these different parts of the country have amplified Split's self-identity as 'the Other'. Journalist Damir Pilić from *Slobodna Dalmacija*, a local newspaper, points out that:

> “the gap between the ‘rich north’ and the ‘poor south’ seems to have widened (...), with football and football violence serving as the final, most brutal indicators of this societal disparity, which extends beyond football to almost all spheres of life” (Pilić, 2003).

This intricate interplay of politics and identity in the case of the Zagreb-Split relationship has also been manifest in the cultural realm:

> “Politics appears most prominently in its convoluted or ‘transparent’ faces in the context of the Zagreb-Split relationship, especially on those secondary tracks of sports/musical/cultural relations where, with the help of the misfortune of transitional media, the battle for their lively dimension is generally lost” (Prica and Škokić, 2007: 8).

Such observations are now almost two decades old. Split’s industrial era, and the ensuing devastation and consequent poverty from the deindustrialisation of the early 2000s, have been replaced by an affluence credited to an international coastal tourism mono-culture, from which other coastal Croatian cities (Dubrovnik, Rijeka, Šibernik, Zadar) have also profited. Split’s secondness in relation to Zagreb, with its unassailable capital perch, of course, persists; making the relationship differently painful.

Split’s Otherness – which is, from time to time, highlighted by a football match or in the political arena – appropriates the so-called Dalmatian mentality as a popular argument to articulate the difference that constitutes Split as the second(ary) city. During the 1980s and 1990s, European port cities transformed while facing global economic and social challenges that required them to adapt and rebrand themselves. These changes were infused by a local culture that evoked its maritime character, thus becoming an essential reference in place-making. As such, the maritime aspect of local culture in port cities added ‘’a certain character and ‘personality’ to new forms of consumption, tourism, and leisure opportunities” (Warsewa, 2017: 152). “The affiliation to a larger Mediterranean world has been somewhat utilized by local social actors, both at political and cultural levels, to draw symbolic boundaries with their continental counterparts” (Cocco 2006: 11). The uniqueness of Split embodied in local maritime culture, often emphasized in contrast to Mitteleuropean Zagreb, has become a powerful symbolic reference that showcases local resilience combined with the transformative cosmopolitan vibe of the Mediterranean port city. This uniqueness stems from the maritime legacy which is reflected in the local dialect, cultural practices, unwritten rules of belonging to Split (such as daily routines, customs, and a laid back attitude) (cf. Warsewa, 2017: 150).

2. This paper

This paper has been developed as a collaborative effort across disciplines: sociology, anthropology, and geography. It also brings together a relatively well trodden research field – that of port cities (e.g. Jacobs, Ducruet & De Langen, 2010) – with a more obscure consideration of second cities. It also aligns with the research interests of all three co-authors in small islands which, we have realised, almost always have port cities as capital cities when they are jurisdictions, and therefore the 'port-city-as-second-city' phenomenon does not materialise (Baldacchino, 2025). The methodology is a broad desk-based research dive into secondary data, but nicely complemented by the observations and experiences of the three authors with tensions between port cities and capital cities, as well as with the enduring rivalry between the Croatian cities of Zagreb and Split. This paper aims to rethink our understanding of second cities by analysing the multi-layered relations and ambivalences that emerge when secondness is juxtaposed with port characteristics and maritime culture. We are considering the entanglement of historical, cultural, social, and economic processes that condition the ambivalences associated with second cities.

After a brief overview of first/second city cases and their associated problems, our study will focus on the coastal city of Split as Croatia's second city. Our goal is to understand what constitutes Split as a second city and how the coastal experience, maritime character and cosmopolitan vibe of Mediterranean Split trigger social and cultural processes in which secondness is questioned and (re)negotiated. By juxtaposing relations with the country's capital and the broader Adriatic region, we seek to understand how the changing character of Split as a port and as a second city is being questioned and (re)negotiated.

3. Tales of two cities: Capital cities *versus* second (port) cities

Every country in the world (except Nauru) has a capital city which is typically its seat of government and where the hand of the state is the heaviest. The second-largest city or second metropolitan area is usually called a second city and often has a distinct economic dynamic and sense of cultural identity. This makes these urban centres analytically intriguing as second cities, encapsulating a "particular 'spirit loci' which emerges as a result of its quality as national periphery and counter-pole to the capital" (Warsewa, 2017: 157). In some cases, the second city might be more populous than the capital, such as in India where Calcutta is bigger than the capital Delhi. At least nine countries in the Mediterranean basin have second cities that are ports (See Table 1). Sometimes, when countries change their capitals, the old capital becomes the second city, shedding some of its purpose, glamour and political heft; but still maintaining a large population by comparison with other cities. This is the case with Alexandria, which was Egypt's capital for almost a thousand years until the Muslim conquest in

641 AD. It is also the case with Türkiye, where Istanbul remains the world's largest city straddling two continents; but it was the more central Ankara that became the capital of Türkiye upon the founding of the Republic in 1923. The first city, usually the capital – but not always, as in the case of New York in the US; or Toronto in Canada – gets most of the attention, the projects and a bigger share of the budget. As a consequence, second cities often face special challenges that result from their relationships with their respective states (Sirry, 2018). A 'second city pattern' would include:

> "… globally active firms in non-financial industries; a common migration pattern; a tradition of innovation in political ideologies and professional/expert cultures; a common historical trajectory due largely to transportation projects that integrate the city more deeply into global flows; and the growth over time of a second–city identity" (Hodos, 2007: 315).

Table 1
Nine Mediterranean countries with capital (non-port) cities and port second cities.

Country	Capital and Non-Port City	Port and Second City
Albania	Tirana	Durrës
Croatia	Zagreb	Split
Cyprus	Nicosia	Limassol
Egypt	Cairo	Alexandria
France	Paris	Marseilles
Greece	Athens	Thessaloniki
Israel	Jerusalem	Tel Aviv
Spain	Madrid	Barcelona
Türkiye	Ankara	Istanbul

Capital cities function as administrative, economic and political capitals; and second cities often feel shortchanged and discriminated against in the allocation of power, national pride and largesse. That is why secondary cities and the challenges of their management and development became important issues in the new urban economic geography which aims to offer solutions that will contribute to the process of decentralization (Roberts, 2014). However, being in the shadows of capital cities when it comes to identity disputes does not necessarily mean that there are historically rooted antagonisms that make second cities "inevitable victims of modern nation-building" (Umbach, 2005: 662). These contemporary animosities could be of recent origin, growing out of economic rivalries that, on the surface, function as predominantly identity disputes. According to Maiken Umbach's analysis of Barcelona and Hamburg as second cities, their secondary status dates back to the 19th century and stems from economic competition:

> "[This initiated a] shift toward a new idiom of identity politics, on both the cultural and constitutional level … With the influx of workers, cities like Barcelona and Hamburg became sites for experimenting with new forms of symbolic politics and thereby played a vital role in defining the political culture of the state" (Umbach, 2005: 667, 662).

Nevertheless, the fact remains that locally infused antagonisms between capital cities and second cities nowadays are deeply historically ingrained and are intertwined in the vortex of politics, economy, mentality issues, cultural differences, or language affairs. These conflicts – whether they involve sporadic situationally induced hostilities brought on by football games in smaller cities like Split, or significant and public identity conflicts in larger cities like Barcelona – call for a wider examination of the changing criteria that makes cities more or less central or marginal. Whether it is about culture, maritime orientation, the port character of the city, or economic or political affairs, rethinking second cities and their relations with their surroundings requires a critical examination of their ambivalent nature.

"Conflict narratives" may be manufactured by journalists to add some colour and drama to soccer matches (Lopez-Gonzalez, et al., 2014). But it would be more accurate to argue that football rivalry reflects deeply embedded antagonisms, whose foundations may be linguistic, historical, cultural, political but also facilitated by geography. Even in tiny Malta, the world's tenth smallest country by land area, there is a strong rivalry between the football clubs of 'The City', peninsular Valletta and, until recently, the second largest inland town of Birkirkara, barely four kilometres away. This rivalry "… pits Birkirkara's inauthenticity against Valletta's authenticity; Birkirkara's modernity against Valletta's tradition; Birkirkara's bourgeois sensibilities against Valletta's rough-and-ready proletarianism" (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2006: 190).

In the end, the second (and secondary) city that is a port city may offer some counterbalance to the capital city that is *not* a port city as a symbol of the diversity of the nation-state, while adopting a situational logic that is steeped in maritimity. Their ambivalent status of being both the centre (in terms of local culture and its cosmopolitan vibe) and the periphery (in relation to the country's capital) points to the overlapping and shifting of diverse criteria – cultural, political, social, economic – in this dynamic interplay that makes their secondness (cf. Warsewa, 2017: 156). As such, such second and port cities pose as ''important laboratories for the definition of identity around religion, nation, ethnicity and locality" (De Boeck, Cassiman & Van Wolputte, 2009: i).

When rethinking antagonisms between capital and port cities, as well as among the port cities themselves, local culture and its maritime character play an important role in reinventing and reinforcing the sense of identity and regional development. As such, local maritime identity is never detached from globalisation processes or be-

longing to the broader region (cf. Warsewa, 2017: 158). To understand the intricacies of local culture and its importance for port cities, especially second cities, one needs to comprehend how it functions and permeates relationships between neighbouring cities or distant capitals. In the Croatian context, there are subtle meanings and vernacular expressions that reflect the manner in cities consider each other. What is often described as 'rivalry' or 'intolerance' in academic discourse on the level of everyday life manifests itself through not-so-sharp and more subtle narratives and texts. The use of subtler and ethnographically grounded rhetoric is manifest, easily replacing the strong dichotomy that occasionally comes to the fore. For instance, the sharp discourse of 'conflict' or 'intolerance' can be replaced by a semi-serious rhetoric of proverbial animosity. The idea of proverbial animosities or *campanilism* fits better with ethnographically grounded reflections of everyday life and the situational character that shapes the intense relations between cities and their dwellers. It also fits better with the local view of everyday small talk and gossip (*ćakula*, in Croatian) where these animosities happen and are articulated, accompanied by humorous comments and sarcastic remarks that are noticeable in the language:

> Campanilism is based on the production of mocking collective nicknames. Anecdotes, jokes, proverbs and similar oral forms are used as a means of confirming characteristics attributed to certain communities. Nowadays, their performance is mainly connected to sporting events, celebrations of patron saints' days, and school children's disputes (Perinić Lewis & Škrbić Alempijević, 2014: 153).

And yet, how do these proverbial animosities and localistic sentiments manifest and occur? Rijeka, the largest Croatian port, held the position of the second-largest city from the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1981 when Split overtook it demographically. Notably, the competition between the football teams of these two cities mirrors the intensity seen between the capital and Split. At the vernacular region level in Dalmatia, a rivalry also unfolds between Zadar and Split, which experienced parallel demographic growth until the early 20th century. Subsequently, Split evolved into a regional hub, becoming the largest city in Dalmatia. Zadar endured significant devastation in World War II, facing bombardment by the Allies in 1943 and 1944 (Pribilović, 2006). Notably, certain residents of Zadar asserted that Split orchestrated the Allied bombing, purportedly to obstruct Zadar from becoming the capital of Dalmatia. This assertion adds fuel to the existing rivalry between the two cities. Nowadays, the Zadar-Split rivalry is felt less, perhaps because Zagreb, due to its economic and political heft, has become, in a way, a 'common enemy' for coastal cities and is seen as responsible for the unequal economic and demographic development in Croatia.

It is also common to find that capital cities are located closer to the geophysical centre of a country, and so are not coastal. In contrast, second cities can afford to be

based around port communities with their strong maritime traditions. Indeed, various countries, especially large ones, have taken the initiative to deliberately re-site their capital city away from the coastal area, and therefore away from 'the edge', and closer to the centre and geographical pivot of their territory: think Nigeria, for example, with the federal capital moving from coastal Lagos to central Abuja in 1991; Brazil (from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia in 1960); and even archipelagic Indonesia, in the process of relocating the capital from Jakarta to more central Nusantara.

Hence the 'city-city' rivalry extends to different paradigms of economic development, historiography and ways of life. In Spain, the rivalry between the capital Madrid – located at the geophysical hub of the country – and the port city of Barcelona has morphed into a struggle over regional autonomy, language preference, possible secession … and of course the enduring competition between football (soccer) clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona FC and their *clássico* clashes. Thessaloniki stands as the only "urban counterweight" to "hydrocephalous Athens", where 40% of the Greek population is concentrated (Keridis, 2020). In France, the strongest football rivalry implicates Paris St Germain and Olympique Marseilles, capital and second (port) city respectively (Ranc, 2009). The core-periphery dynamics have been used to better understand the relationship between Durrës, Albania's largest port and second city, and the inland capital, Tirana (Draçi & Nikolli, 2014). In Kenya, balmy, touristy and archipelagic Mombasa contrasts with urban and cooler Nairobi. Coastal Shanghai has a larger population than the more inland Beijing, China's capital city. In Russia, St Petersburg, the 'Venice of the North', was deliberately built as a window to the West; in contrast, continental Moscow is the bastion of conservatism as well as of Russia's cultural and historical isolation from Europe (Gritsai & van der Wusten, 2000). In Israel, secular, modern and 'global' Tel Aviv contrasts sharply with more sacred, historical and 'local' Jerusalem, just 60 km away (Alfasi & Fenster, 2005).

If first (and capital) cities are continental, then second (and port) cities are incontinent, in the sense of being less restrained, lacking self-control. In Jungian terms, if a capital city expresses the *superego* (and moral rectitude) of a country, being the centre of gravity of its legal, institutional and administrative systems and ethics, then the port city is the *id*, more driven by impulse, adventure, flamboyancy, bonhomie and *joie de vivre*. Coastal (including island) life unfolds differently:

> [P]ower is best analysed at its extremities, presumably where the paradigm is weakest. Islands [and coasts], marginal by geography, many with a deep and long colonial infiltration, appear as ideal candidates for such an exercise (Baldacchino, 2008: 41).

> In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates (Foucault, 1967 [1984]: 27).

One can argue that *coastal* (and especially *island*) port cities and their folk have a particular character: a lackadaisical and light-hearted attitude to the sea and "what it portends" (Hay, 2013); an inevitable destiny and tilt towards globalisation; a familiarity of working on the edge of the law; a sense of opportunism; a disposition towards flexible specialization; a natural predilection for *bricolage*, fixing things and coping with things as they come (e.g. Azzopardi & Mann, 2007). This casual, easygoing attitude, which in Dalmatian terms often manifests as a "take it easy" or "laid back" kind of attitude, might come across as a supposedly carefree lifestyle on the surface; but it conceals strong ambiguities and struggles.

Darwin (2020) describes 'port cities' as 'gateway cities', springing up on the edge where two different zones meet. They are mainly maritime cities: the place to exchange the produce of different economies and cultures; and where goods are transferred from one mode of transport to another. They are the home of ancillary services: shipping agents, insurers, money-changers, banks, hauliers and draymen, dockers and porters, pimps and prostitutes, and the merchants who manage the vital transactions. Some port cities deal in *staples*, and therefore collect and export the produce of their own immediate neighbourhood, and which depend on a hinterland (think Odessa, Ukraine; or Hong Kong, China). Meanwhile, other port cities are *entrepôts*: lacking their own hinterland, their commercial relations are with similar ports located elsewhere, and with distant suppliers and customers, preferably mediated with their own merchant fleets: think Singapore, the entrepôt par excellence (Peebles & Wilson, 2002); or Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the first 'global hub port city' of the Middle East (Akhavan, 2017). These latter-type port cities become conduits, accelerators and agents of *globalisation*: understood as the long-distance exchange of people, goods, money, technologies, ideas, beliefs and biota (animals, plants, microbes, including those responsible for communicable diseases, such as influenza). They are gateways and nodes within a global transport network, which carries over 90% of world trade:

> Port cities are centres of exchange, where different cultures and environments meet: at the boundaries between land and sea (Akhavan, 2019: 99).

4. Threats to port cities

A relative advantage enjoyed by the inland capital/first city with respect to its coastal counterpart is security. Whether an enemy is likely to invade via sea or land, being coastal implies being more likely to be caught by surprise in a seaborne attack; or liable to be surrounded, besieged and perhaps starved into submission if attacked from land (and sea). Port cities, like the Levantine (eastern Mediterranean) trio of Smyrna/Izmir (modern day Türkiye), Alexandria (Egypt) and Beirut (Lebanon) shared the following features: geography, diplomacy, language, hybridity, commerce, modernity but also vulnerability to attack (Mansel, 2020: 35). As Beirut (in 1860) and Alexandria (in 1882) had discovered, with ports being accessible to foreign navies, port cities could be

easier to occupy (Mansel, 2020: 47). Today, port cities are grappling with the impacts of globalization. Modern ports are becoming more spatially and functionally isolated from their immediate urban surroundings, frequently undergoing privatization, and failing to integrate seamlessly with the city. Consequently, there is a rising need to develop strategies aimed at enhancing both spatial and socio-economic ties between ports and their respective cities (Daamen and Vries, 2013). Such ties impact on the development and resilience of port cities in the relation to others, particularly the capital city.

The proximity and ubiquity of the sea makes coastal communities' key agonists of another threat, this time environmental. Sea level rise as a consequence of climate change is likely to ravage coastal communities in the foreseeable future. Particularly in developing countries, where the financing required to undertake climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives may be sorely lacking, port cities may find out that their ability to function economically (as ports) and to offer safe and affordable accommodation and attractive employment (as cities) is being severely compromised. Coastal cities may face a new population exodus, this time consisting of climate refugees.

In the longstanding tension between capital/first and port/second cities, the capital enjoys the advantage of hinterland availability. An inland city may find it easier to expand, both for residential and industrial reasons, into its surrounding and circumscribing space. In Croatia, Zagreb is geographically well-positioned and can expand spatially, while Split is already facing limitations in spatial expansion due to the geophysical relief barriers that surround it. For a port-city, and given the advent of technological advancements and containerisation, expanding port facilities may require a radical relocation to other coastal areas, where space is plentiful, rents cheaper, social discomfort is removed and deeper dredging is possible (Akhavan, 2019: 102). Concurrently, the waterfront is 'returned' to the city and becomes the space for a new generation of public and/or private constructions. Indeed, and for these reasons, especially in the Western world, there is a weakening bond between the city and its port. The 'cosmopolitan hybridity' that has historically characterised port cities because of their maritime pursuits risks being lost, as features of maritimity are displaced and move elsewhere: ironically, the port aspect of the port city may be overtaken by events and 'progress', including touristification.

5. How the Blue Economy Beckons

Similar dynamics may be afoot, given the escalating discourse and policy moves in favour of 'the blue economy'. Although this is a loose and amorphous term, it involves what could be a dramatic resurgence of interest in coastal and marine investments: ranging from fishing and marine engineering, to marine based medical derivatives and renewable energy production. Coastal cities may find themselves awash with an interest that has not been seen since before the industrial revolution, a traumatic event which marginalised many coastal settlements in favour of industrial heartlands, lead-

ing to losses in population. The blue economy renaissance may be partly a blessing, extracting coastal and island communities from an excessive dependence on a single industry – tourism – which also tends to be both fickle and seasonal. It could alternatively lead to expressions of even greater dependence on this industry: with over-tourism, gentrification and ballooning costs of property that already trouble other historic Mediterranean cities, such as Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca and Venice (Damnjanović, 2021).

Critical here will be a sober assessment of who controls new investments in the blue economy: will they be mainly public or private sector driven? How will they ride on, or instead reshape, existing social, political and economic configurations in the affected coastal communities? To what extent would the cosmopolitan hybridity that stamped the character of port cities be reassembled and reaffirmed, or shaken and transformed, by the new economic land/seascapes? Will the blue economy serve to unsettle and rejig the power dynamic between inland capital city (and its suburbs) and the coastal port city (and its islands), downplaying Foucault's pirates and shoring up the police? Coastal dwellers are instinctively wary, and do well to remain so:

> Continents weigh us down. They are thick and sumptuous. Archipelagos are able to diffract, they create diversity and expansiveness, they are spaces of relation that recognize all the infinite details of the real. Being in harmony with the world through archipelagos means inhabiting this diffraction, while still rallying coastlines and joining horizons. They open us to a sea of wandering: to ambiguity, to fragility, to drifting, which is not the same as futility (Glissant, 2022: 20-21).

The tension between capital and coastal is well manifested in a historical ecology of (small) islands and archipelagos which hug coastlines and often have a symbiotic relationship with mainland coastal cities. Coastal by nature, such 'near islands' – again, plentiful in Croatia (Starc, 2020) – express more starkly the tensions, impacts and contradictions associated with the long shadow of the distant capital. The recently kindled interest in the potential of the blue economy threatens a real encroachment of 'the mainland' (and its land-based logics) to its peripheries. The outcome is a subsequent deinsularisation, sometimes accompanied by its tangible, geophysical component: a bridge, dyke, causeway or tunnel that fixedly links island to mainland, rendering the former "pseudo-islands" (Faričić & Mirošević, 2014).

6. Split(ting) the Second City

The concept of the tidemark, proposed by anthropologist Sarah Green, is helpful to better understand the transformative and relational characteristics of the second city. The idea of the tidemark combines the lines (simplifications) and traces (material objects) that help to explore the metaphorical, metonymical and material aspects of border-ness (Green, 2018: 71). By pointing out hybrids, fluid identities, and mixtures

(Green 2018: 72), the tidemark integrates space, time, materiality, and the continuous transformation of things and places that are alive and contingent (Green, 2018: 80–81). Just like marks left in the sand by the water that recedes with the tide, a tidemark points to the combination of material and epistemological elements ingrained in spatial contexts and lived experiences. Consequently, we approach the marginality of the second city *tidalectically* (Brathwaite, 1973), as a porous, fluid, and dynamic phenomenon that rearranges diverse relations with itself and others, playfully manipulating the tidemarks that redefine it in a manner reminiscent of a Mediterranean coastal city. In doing so, coastal second cities not only relate to the capital as the main source of their secondness; but also, to other urban settlements in the region – such as Rijeka, in Croatia – that challenge the dominant second position.

How has the relationship between Split as the second city and Zagreb as the capital of Croatia, as well as the rivalries and rumors that sometimes flash between the two cities, shaped modern cultural differences, social traits, economic dynamics, and identity issues? In order to understand the dynamics between Split and Zagreb, one has to rethink these *tidelectically* and point to the fluctuating spatial, material and temporal aspects that condition them. Aside from the relations emerging between different coastal and continental cities, the maritime aspect and belonging to the wider Adriatic and Mediterranean region plays a vital role in affirming these historically, culturally and ideologically conditioned divisions, essential in understanding belonging and identity-making. The cultural and political implications of belonging to the Adriatic are not ephemeral issues:

> "The Adriatic Sea provides a rich system of symbolic references that have been largely exploited for identity-making, even recently. In all former Yugoslav Adriatic regions, from Istria to Montenegro, the Adriatic Sea has often granted symbolic support to reframe specific perspectives on national identity issues" (Cocco, 2006: 9).

The redrawing of symbolic boundaries has changed the status of second cities throughout history and enabled the emergence of maritime culture as a symbolic resource. This process was always imbued with the problems of belonging to a region where ethno-national identities overlapped with an internalized coastal division line that reflects geo-symbolic redrawings of the region (*ibid.*). These historical, ideological and political rearrangements reflect on the notion of belonging, which in the coastal region remains "a powerful symbolic marker, reworked as political borders shift and draw new lines on maps of both land and sea, and migrations redistribute peoples across those maps. (Ballinger, 2006: 33) The question of belonging to the sea remains a powerful identity reference in everyday life. According to Croatian ethnoanthropologist Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, enduring ambivalence is reflected in local narratives and emphasizes the different interests between 'those up there' (people from

continental regions, including the capital city) and those living along the coast (1999: 111). This division between the land and the sea, and which implies the division between the mainland and the coast, reflects a mutual mistrust between centre and periphery (Cocco, 2006: 10). Consequentially, the popular notions that have survived until today are further energized and complicated by new political contexts in which 'upper regions' are associated with the centres of power; while the sea and the coastal regions are the periphery (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1999: 112). Therefore, in Croatia, the question of the status of the second city must necessarily be considered as a reflection of the historical fragmentation of space, constant political mappings and re-mappings, social polarization, and culturally specific understanding of regional belonging and local culture. Consequentially, this complicates the case of Split as the second city as it points not just to its secondness emerging in relation to the centre of political power on the mainland but also in relation to the sea and the maritime character often evoked in identity-making processes. The power of maritime symbolism permeates the relationship between the first and the second city, thus affirming its ambivalent nature and its otherness.

> The rediscovery, restoration, redefinition and re-exploitation of both material and symbolic forms and expressions of local culture and their contribution to the 'aestheticisation' of urban structures, to place-making and image-building largely reflects those collective norms and orientations, which formerly emerged from the specific tensions of risk and safety, affiliation and a sense of 'the other' as well as of centre and periphery (Warsewa, 2017: 158)

In recent years, occasional news breaks out in the media, evoking solutions to age-old economic inequalities between the heartland, specifically the City of Zagreb, and the coast, and reaffirming Zagreb's economic dominance in Croatia, responsible for more than one third of national GDP (IndexHR, 2024), and with the highest development index compared to all other Croatian counties (Index Razvijenosti (2023). The issue of economic disparities that permeates media discourse is not without exaggeration. The unequal rhythms of economic development between the coastal region and the continental area, or more precisely, the capital (which sometimes unfairly represents all of continental Croatia), share a legacy of political, social, and historical changes and transformations. Although it is difficult to point to a specific historical period or political system as the leading cause of this situation, the most recent transition from socialism to post-socialism highlights the dynamics of these disparities and how they function. In the context of Sarah Green's concept of tidemarks, contemporary social and cultural phenomena can be traced to changes in the shifting and evolving rhythms of the socialist legacy and the post-socialist 'year zero.' In other words, every new political system has been built on the unresolved inherited conditions of the previous one. In this spatial distribution of economic activity and political power, certain regions like Dalmatia became marginalized due to their limited resources, falling behind

in development. At the same time, the capital remained a centre for economic growth (cf. Radeljak Kaufmann 2016: 109-110). This uneven constellation challenged the post-socialist government, which maintained its role as "a key player, deciding on the development of a particular region or municipality" (Jambrač 2020: 669). The challenges of the transition from socialism to post-socialism were addressed through "an odd symbiosis of market absolutism and the perception of the ethno-national state as infallible" (Tomić-Koludrović and Petrić 2007: 127), thus laying the groundwork for the further perpetuation of inequalities. Contemporary catchy news stories call for an awakening, raising awareness of the huge economic inbalances between the coast and the heartland. One such narrative is the story of the green-blue transversal, which, from the perspective of economic experts or media exposed entrepreneurs, presupposes closer cooperation between continental (green) Croatia and coastal (blue) Croatia. In the context of the extremely dominant service sector and the tourism-oriented economic engine of the country, the green-blue transversal concept calls for capitalizing on Croatia's resources as the basis for an equitable economic development. The continental part of Croatia should be of service to coastal tourism, while providing coastal tourism hubs with domestically produced goods. The historical background of such a solution can be traced back to the 1970s, when, during socialist Yugoslavia, the idea of an Adriatic orientation emerged. This notion emphasized the importance of maritimity as a precondition for the social and economic development of the entire country (Krstulović, 1965: 178); but it remained "inconsistent with the views and interests of the centre of power, far from the sea" (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1999: 110). Although a political decision to prioritize Danubian over Adriatic orientations reduced links with Mediterranean countries, the maritime orientation has remained an essential reference in economic policies despite the trap of economic sustainability of politically fuelled economic decisions (cf. Crkvenac 1993). The utilization of maritime routes and resources occurred concurrently with the development of land transportation and the origins of mass tourism, allowing the arrival of a larger number of tourists. Coastal Adriatic cities were recognized as the carriers of these kinds of economic activities, while neighbouring islands were identified as:

> ...refuges of peace and natural beauty ... that have lost the most natural connection to the coast, suffering significant losses in their economy due to the disruption of the vital link with the broader market (Krstulović, 1965: 180).

The former Yugoslav Adriatic orientation became the cornerstone of contemporary economic development, as well as the main argument for infrastructural development that could connect the coast with the continent. Over time and with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Adriatic orientation was renamed and rebranded by many, mostly unsuccessfully. This shift towards the Adriatic in the post-socialist period aligns in many ways with the shift in identity-making strategies that emphasize the Mediterranean aspect of national identity which stands as the "counterpart for the Balkan turmoil, for

it symbolizes a more peaceful, Western and advanced world" (Cocco 2006: 11). The green-blue transversal became one of the ghost stories that occasionally appear in the press and in political statements as an attempt to revitalize connections between the heartland and coast. Parallel to the development of tourism in the 1960s and 70s, the question of symbolic closeness or distance between the coastal area and the continent has morphed into numerous problematic nodes that, depending on the context, address identity issues, regional development, and economic differences. In this context, the 'green' and 'blue' parts of the transversal equation have evolved into issues of the centralization and enrichment of one region in Croatia (Zagreb, the capital, and its suburbs) at the expense of all others. The story of inequality and discrimination may have even taken on mythical dimensions and gradually solidified through generational renewal within regional ceremonies and ritual (Prica, 2007: 8). The case of Split becomes particularly noteworthy, as Split took the "lead in shaping identity perceptions and divisions in the national imaginary" and "adopts culturally and politically charged connotations of Central Europe and the Mediterranean, along with the symbolism of the north and south, continent and coast" (*ibid.*).

To better understand the dichotomy between Zagreb as the metaphorical embodiment of the nation's capital and Split as its southern antipode, one should also examine the question of borders. In the wider context of Southeastern Europe and its overlapping connections with the Mediterranean, this issue of the Adriatic region needs to consider borders beyond the narrow and fixed political meanings of lines marking the territory. Since the question of borders and their transformations is intertwined with the identity of Split as second city, it is worthwhile considering Claudio Magris' reflections about identity as a kind of horror that traces its existence to drawing a border and repelling whatever is on the other side (Magris, 2001: 38). The entangling of Southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean left traces in the urban imagery of Split and its popular-cultural representations. From the notion of Split being stigmatized as a city of crime and drugs in the post-Yugoslav war period of the 1990s to cinematic, almost *noir* ambience of the post-socialist city in films like *Ta Divna Splitska Noć* (That Beautiful Split Night) and daily media news witnessing clientelism and nepotism, the question of borders becomes an analytically intriguing entry point for understanding the emergence of Split as the second city. This public image of Split, depicted through popular culture, points to the changing relations that redefine the *secondness* of Split. There is a constant de- and re-construction underway for second cities; a sort of reinvention of their history and memory (De Boeck, Cassiman & Van Wolpute, 2009: vii). This is especially significant when it comes to the urban seascapes of Split, perceived as a contact zone and border (Gillis, 2012: 16; 2018).

7. Conclusion

> In their dynamic relationship, "Zagreb and Split reflect each other like a mirror, but one that often presents distorted and grotesque images" (Prica, 2007: 8).

A port city is not simply a coastal city that has a port. It is part of a complex assemblage that pits it in an often uncomfortable relationship with other settlements, with which it must in turn both collaborate and compete. The tensions are more palpable when the port city is also the second city. And a second city cannot be conceptualized in narrowly political economic terms, focusing simply on its regional industrial structure and economic development options (Kresl, 1992). Indeed, "the second city ideal type includes an ensemble of elements, no single one of which is decisive, and which overall distinguishes the category from global cities" (Hodos, 2007: 329).

In this paper, we have proposed what we think is a rather unique case study of Split illuminated by its dual status as a maritime-plus-second city, while grounding this scrutiny in a global framework. We argue that being 'second best' has its consequences; while being a port city accentuates the contrast with the capital (and non-port) city of Zagreb. Here is an "affective geography" (Navaro Yashin, 2012) that imbricates culture, sport, and discourse with economic and political actions in a fluid signature of urban difference and inequality. The manner in which antagonisms on the national level, stirred by first/second city logic, are experienced and perpetuated on the local level affirm and reinforce existing hierarchical optics and dynamics.

There may be much more to the *Figa i Pirja* fountain than meets the eye.

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Izvorni znanstveni rad

Glavni grad Zagreb naspram priobalnoga Splita: Trajne tenzije između glavnih gradova i lučkih gradova drugih po važnosti

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Sažetak

Nalazeći se na rubu prostora i politike priobalni gradovi (ponekad i otoci) uobičajeno predstavljaju drugu violinu u odnosu na veće, urbane glavne gradove, smještene bliže središnjem dijelu unutrašnjosti svojih država. Ovaj rad nastoji istražiti prilike i prijetnje s kojima se suočavaju priobalni gradovi i njima susjedni otoci, iznova ih promišljajući kroz koncept 'drugoga grada'. Danas se status drugoga (po važnosti) grada uspostavlja s obzirom na veličinu, resurse te ekonomsku i političku moć. U kontekstu drugih (i drugih po važnosti) priobalnih gradova, ti se kriteriji dodatno kompliciraju njihovim perifernim statusom i 'marginalnom' ulogom. Ipak, takvo se generičko shvaćanje drugih (po važnosti) gradova dodatno propituje, omogućujući pritom mnogo složenije definicije i multidisciplinaran pristup. Ovaj rad nudi ponovno promišljanje načina shvaćanja 'drugoga grada', analizirajući višeslojne odnose i ambivalencije koje nastaju ispreplitanjem povijesnih, kulturnih, društvenih i ekonomskih procesa koji definiraju priobalne gradove kao druge. Na temelju analize dokumenata, analize diskursa sekundarne literature te multidisciplinarnosti autora, kao i njihovih iskustava i prisutnosti u gradovima koje proučavaju, naglasak je na načinu na koji se *drugost* grada doživljava, pregovara i redefinira. Nakon kratkog pregleda slučajeva prvih/drugih gradova i njihovih problema, čime je postavljen okvir, istraživanje se usmjerava na priobalni grad Split kao drugi grad Hrvatske u odnosu na (ne-priobalni) glavni grad Zagreb. Naš je cilj razumjeti što Split čini drugim gradom te na koji način iskustvo življenja na obali i kozmopolitski duh mediteranskoga Splita potiču društvene i kulturne procese u kojima se *drugost* propituje i iznova pregovara. Nadalje, želimo razumjeti na koji način promjenjiva (ne)vidljivost urbanog morskog krajobraza Splita propituje i nadjačava njegovu stigmu kao 'drugog po redu' najboljeg urbanog naselja u Hrvatskoj.

Ključne riječi: glavni gradovi, Hrvatska, maritimnost, lučki gradovi, drugi gradovi, Split, Zagreb.