

A Small Town's Quest for Modernity in the Shadow of the Big City: The Case of Senj and Fiume

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Most of the theories concerning modernization and a number of trends in the historiography treat the big city as the most important arena of modernization, an arena which, thanks to our grasp of an array of social and economic transformations, can be made the ideal subject of studies on the processes and consequences of modernization. From this perspective, the small town becomes a kind of abstraction for backwardness, failed attempts to catch up, or a community that simply has remained unaffected by modernization. Thus, the study of the dynamics of modernization in smaller urban settlements from a new perspective which attributes genuine agency to them may well offer new findings and insights. In the historiography concerning the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the recent imperial turn has shown a perfectly natural interest in the peripheries of the empire, as it has striven to untangle the intertwining strands of local, regional, national, and imperial loyalties found there. The research on which this article is based, which focuses on Senj (Zengg), a small seaside Croatian city, is shaped by this dual interest. Senj's resistance and adaptation to top-down initiatives of modernization can be captured through its conflict with the city of Fiume (today Rijeka, Croatia), which is not far from Senj and which before World War I belonged to Hungary. In this story, Fiume represents the "mainstream" manner of big-city modernization: it became the tenth most active port city in Europe over the course of a few decades. The area surrounding the city, however, was not able to keep up with this rapid pace of development. In this article, I present the distinctive program for modernization adopted by the elites of Senj, as well as their critique of modernization. Furthermore, the history of the city towards the end of the nineteenth century sheds light on the interdependencies among the cities of Austria–Hungary, interdependencies which were independent of legal or administrative borders. By analyzing relations between Senj and Fiume, I seek to offer a nuanced interpretation of the conflict between the two cities, which tends to be portrayed simply as a consequence of national antagonisms.

Keywords: anti-modernism, scaling urban modernity, urban history, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Fiume, Senj

For both contemporaries and historians, the explosion of urbanization in the second half of the nineteenth century seemed a fundamental process the study of which, it was hoped, would yield insights into the essence of the great transformation called modernization. The industrializing metropolis, which was

expanding at an unprecedented rate, was seen by scholars (sociologists, social psychologists, historians, urbanists) as a kind of laboratory. With regards to the writing of history, this understanding of the big city has survived to the present day in an array of trends in the historiography.¹

Regardless of their actual size, small towns figured in this modernization-discourse only as the counterexample of or counterpoint to the metropolis: as an ideal type, they represented everything against which urban modernity could be defined. In the eyes of critics of the big city, they offered a cohesive community instead of an atomized society, a space of serenity instead of overstimulation, breathing room instead of congestion, a human scale instead of exaggeration, a stable value system instead of a crisis of values, or in other words, a space which was thriving from the perspectives of health care, intellectual and moral prosperity. In contrast, in the eyes of admirers of urban modernity, the small town was defined by its shortcomings. As a space that had been left out of the process of modernization, it was seen as stagnant or in decline. These two visions² thus idealized or, by simply applying the label “backward,” ignored the specific trajectories of small-town development. Apart from the top predators in the urban networks (i.e. the most rapidly developing), other cities seemed motionless, doomed to stagnation, or frozen in the pose of preservation of values, and historical scholarship rarely sought to uncover the distinctive dynamics of their processes of modernization.

In 2008, the *Journal of Urban History* devoted a thematic issue entitled *Decentering Urban History* to the problem of small towns. In the introductory study to the issue, James J. Connolly criticized the secondary literature on urban history for focusing predominantly on metropolises and for having “failed to distinguish between the metropolis and the smaller, more peripheral cities in meaningful ways.”³ In other words, according to Connolly, while there is no shortage of case studies on cities that occupy a secondary place in the urban

1 Ferdinand Tönnies is perhaps the individual most responsible for the popularity of this interpretation, though it then enjoyed the support of the modernization theorists he inspired. The central place theory also favored this interpretation, as did the cultural turn in urban history, which concentrated on multiple or cosmopolitan identities. On the level of world-systems theory and global history, megapolises were put center stage. Connolly, “Decentering Urban History,” 3–4.

2 Trains of thought that seek to avoid the extremes cited above can also perpetuate this dichotomy, for example in Simmel's classic narrative, the small town is given a dual role (as a site that provides space for the individual but puts limits on his freedom), but it still remains static, as opposed to the dynamically changing character of the big city. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life.”

3 Connolly, “Decentering Urban History,” 3.

hierarchy, many of these studies either describe these cities as counterexamples to the big city or simply insist on difference in size. And yet it was precisely the process of urbanization in the second half of the nineteenth century that made it essential to draw a conceptual distinction between “small” and “big.” In theoretical works on modern urban life, this separation of settlements into big city or small city appears at the same time as the process itself, i.e. towards the end of the nineteenth century. The long-standing topos of the opposition between nature and city (a topos often attributed to Rousseau) was enriched with a new shade of meaning when the modern metropolis began to become such a striking phenomenon in the European urban network. It was no longer simply a matter of the ways in which, in contrast with the rural lifestyle, the huge crowds thronging into the cities allegedly exerted a corrupting influence and city life in general was physically unhealthy. Now, the industrializing city was seen as a threat to urban values themselves.⁴ It thus became necessary to consider what made a city good and how the modern city could be good to live in. The arguments used in the discourses against city life shifted away from praise of rural communities and towards a positive reassessment of the small town, and the array of theoretical works on urbanization began to raise questions concerning the ways in which the city could be improved or perfected.⁵

This theoretical body of work, however, in no way compensates for the dearth of historical research which describes the settlements which fell on the lower levels of the urban hierarchy as communities which were capable of taking action. Small towns reacted to change in a variety of ways: their strategies depended on their experiences, resources, and demographics, as well as on the trades and professions in which their populations specialized. These towns offered an array of different economic imaginaries,⁶ mindsets that were highly dependent on the settlements’ intellectual capital. The town under investigation in this paper showed willingness to take initiative. Senj’s (Zengg by its Hungarian name)⁷ reaction to radical transformation was twofold: on the one hand, the town’s intellectuals turned to an idealized past to find support for their community and reinforce their identity in times of transition. This anti-modern

4 The classic version of this vision is Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.

5 Bourillon, “La détestation de la ville,” 5–8.

6 Much as they do today. See Lorentzen and van Heur, *Cultural Political Economy of Small Cities*.

7 Regarding the use of place names, I use the standard English names (assuming there is a standard English name for a given settlement) to make them easily identifiable. Fiume is an exception, since its name today, Rijeka, refers to a city changed in its structure, as it incorporates the neighboring town of Sušak. However, when citing a source, I use the name used in the source.

gesture was complemented, however, by their plans for the future, an alternative vision of urban modernity which included a critical perception of the dominant model: Fiume's (today Rijeka, Croatia) way of development. When facing change, Senj showed both resistance and adaptation, and its strategies drew on both traditionalism and innovation. The aim of this article is to examine these complex techniques, which made the town resilient to the potentially destructive forces of modernization.

Over the course of the past two decades, researchers focusing on the history of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy have realized that very little attention has been paid to distinctive patterns and strategies of small-town modernization, and they have also realized the potential insights the study of these patterns and strategies might yield. Naturally, representatives of the so-called imperial turn⁸ in the historiography have looked with interest at the peripheries of the empire, as they have striven to untangle the intertwining strands of local, regional, national, and imperial loyalties found in these regions. Research which has adopted this perspective as its point of departure found less that was of interest in the development of the large imperial or national capitals than it did in the histories of the diverse regional centers on different levels of the urban hierarchy. Vienna, Budapest, Prague, and Zagreb came to be seen as "cosmopolitan cities with a small range of influence,"⁹ and they gradually acquired the accoutrements of major international cities. At the same time, smaller urban centers which did not follow the patterns of globalizing urbanism had the potential to reveal more about the functioning of the multiethnic empire.¹⁰ From the perspectives of ethnic, denominational, and occupational makeup or culture and urban planning,

8 Cole, "Visions and Revisions of Empire."

9 This somewhat cumbersome English translation of the Hungarian term "kis hatótávolságú világváros" is meant simply to refer to cities which were connected to the European transport network and were connected by the railway to at least one capital or a foreign trade center. Frisnyák borrows the term from Pál Beluszky, who originally used it to refer to Budapest only: Frisnyák "Budapest Európa," 182.

10 Authors who deal with the reassessment of the peripheries in the urban history of the region include Gantner et al., "Backward and Peripheral?" The recent publication of a large number of works on the history of Lemberg can also be regarded as a sign of this increased interest in the subject: Fässler et al., *Lemberg, Lwów, Lvin*; Czaplicka, *Lvin*; Prokopovych, *Habsburg Lemberg*; Mick, *Lemberg, Lwów, Lvin*; Weck, *Eisenbahn und Stadtentwicklung*; Hein-Kircher, *Lembergs "polnischen Charakter."* Varga discusses the symbolic role of cities on the border areas of a national territory imagined as an ideal: Varga, *The Monumental Nation*. Catherine Horel chose 12 small and medium-sized towns with different statuses as subjects of study explicitly "to counter the disproportionate attention that the largest cities in the empire receive." Horel, *Multicultural Cities*. One of the theoretical foundations of Rosemary Wakeman's monograph is criticism of metropolis-centered urban history writing: Wakeman, *A Modern History*.

they may have been more colorful in the Central European context in which one of the defining elements was heterogeneity, a heterogeneity of which the homogenizing centers offered the least evidence.

My research, which focuses on Senj, a small seaside Croatian city, is shaped by this dual interest: I investigate the town's resilience and its role in a multilayered urban network. The town's resilience reminds us that there was life outside of the metropolises, and the role it played in the urban network sheds light on the ways in which local experiences of urban modernity and modernity as otherness can modify macro-level political indicators such as election results. There is ample evidence in the secondary literature showing that nationalist mobilization is more successful when social and ethnic cleavages overlap, but a reverse logic is also of interest. When access to modernization is uneven among different national communities, it soon becomes apparent that modernization is a power tool, and this realization can influence political loyalties as much as national feelings of belonging can.

Senj, a settlement of roughly 3,000 people, is not far from the city of Fiume, which, over the course of only a few decades, became the tenth most active port city in Europe.¹¹ Not surprisingly, the area surrounding the city, the Croatian Adriatic littoral, was not able to keep up with this rapid pace of development. However, Senj's response, a program of conservation and modernization, went well beyond simple efforts to catch up. Representatives of the community developed a vision which was based on a kind of middle road between the extremes of growth into a bustling metropolis and stagnation. They thus sought to transform the position of the town, which was increasingly excluded from large industry and global trade, into an advantage. This vision had elements of nostalgia and anti-modernism, but it also offered an alternative vision of the future.¹² The city also used the most modern tools to propagate this vision, from

11 Zsigmond, "A fumei magyar tengeri," 58. Following the Settlement concluded by the Austrian and the Hungarian parts of the Habsburg Empire (1867), the Hungarian-Croatian Compromise (1868) redefined the relationship between landlocked Hungary and maritime Croatia, granting the latter limited home rule within the framework of the Hungarian Kingdom. During the negotiations, the parties could not agree on the question regarding the control of the port city Fiume, which lay on Croatian soil but was administered directly from Budapest as a so-called *corpus separatum*. The legal status of Fiume remained contested until the end of the era, though the city functioned as the only Hungarian seaport. All that said on the legal status of Fiume, the port city was also a microcosm of city dwellers of various ethnicities who spoke different languages and engaged in varying economic and cultural activities. On the multi-layered and tumultuous everyday urban life in Fiume, see Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*.

12 As Boym has observed concerning the nature of nostalgia in general, "Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present

the budding regional and national press to the cultivation of a thriving array of associations.

The history of Senj at the end of the nineteenth century also sheds light on the close connections among and interdependence of the cities of the Habsburg lands, regardless of legal boundaries. Although Senj was separated from Fiume by an administrative border, as Senj belonged legally to Croatia while Fiume belonged to Hungary within the dual state, its opportunities for growth and development were determined far more by the port city than by Zagreb, which was gradually becoming the Croatian national capital. Vienna and Budapest also had an increasing influence on Senj's fate, as the two capital cities played a fundamental role in the multilevel decision-making structure of the empire. The tension between Fiume and Senj has usually been characterized in the secondary literature as a consequence of national antagonisms, but it is quite clear that everyday life in cities along the (Hungarian-)Croatian coast was shaped as much or more by their different opportunities and their varying access to the infrastructure than it was by the national question. Thus, the focus of this essay is not on the discourses of nation-building which were prominent at the time, but rather on local discourses and strategies related to modernization.

As the only seaport in Hungary, Fiume played a major role in the national economy, and the Hungarian state made significant investments to improve its infrastructure and industry and make the city competitive with similar port cities across Europe as quickly as possible.¹³ The rapid growth to which the city bore witness is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the fact that, between 1867 (the year of the Austro-Hungarian Settlement) and 1891, the population of this "merchant, sailor, and fisherman town" tripled, and from the perspective of the population of the city that was engaged in industry and traffic, it was the second most industrialized city in Hungary after Banská Štiavnica (Selmecbánya).¹⁴

The secondary literature has attempted to place the city, which was linked to the Hungarian crown as a *corpus separatum*, in the Hungarian urban hierarchy, although it is difficult to find a single category in the various classifications which adequately describes its role and functioning:

have a direct impact on realities of the future. Consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales." Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 13.

13 For a recently published comprehensive assessment of the city's economic development at the end of the nineteenth century see Zsigmond and Pelles, *A fiumei magyar kereskedelmi tengerészet*.

14 Kassa (today Košice, Slovakia) was also on the podium, and Budapest was in fourth place. Fried, *Emlékek városa*, 68, 73.

The situation and urban roles of Fiume [...] were special in the Dualist era; legally it was an exclave of Hungary and the authority of its administrative institutions did not reach beyond the boundaries of the town. Being the only seaport of Hungary, it enjoyed substantial support from the Hungarian state. [...]. As regards the volume of its urban functions, it is at the top of the order of the county centres [...] its hinterland was nevertheless not in the neighbouring areas— from which it was separated by administrative borders, orographic obstacles and the lack of transport infrastructure, and even by language differences—but in its far-away motherland.¹⁵

This characterization of the city as isolated begs for nuance. The position of Fiume can hardly be assessed simply on the basis of its place in the Hungarian urban hierarchy. After Zagreb, it was the second most industrialized city in Croatia as well.¹⁶ More importantly, its modernization had a massive regional influence also. The investigation of the latter makes perceptible the effects of industrialization on the transformation of the urban network across the state-legal frameworks. True, Fiume belonged to the Hungarian crown, but it still played a vibrant role in the network of Croatian cities, and it exerted a strong influence on the seaside settlements in its vicinity.

This influence was mostly a consequence of the fact that all of the infrastructure investments flowed into Fiume. Through its railway connections and the development of its harbor, the city had an unsurmountable advantage over the neighboring port cities, which earlier had been in roughly the same position. Senj was the biggest loser in the concentration of resources. Prior to the construction of the railway that connected Fiume with Zagreb and Budapest (1873), the city had been a major commercial center thanks to the Josephina,¹⁷ a historic road which connected Senj with the city of Karlovac (Károlyváros). Senj resold the goods arriving on this route through its flourishing harbor. However, with the spread of the use of steamships, both the commercial and the main industrial profiles of the town were pushed into the background, and the urban elite, which relied largely on shipbuilding, lost its source of income and thus its

15 Beluszky and Győri, *The Hungarian Urban Network*, 119–20.

16 Vranješ-Šoljan, *Stanovništvo gradova Banske Hrvatske*, 198.

17 The Josephina was built on a route which was once used by the Romans at the initiative of Joseph II. Measured by standards at the time, it was a good-quality road. It was completed in 1779, and it connected Pannonia with Dalmatia, which meant that it connected the city of Karlovac with Senj. Until the construction of the railway lines, the Josephina was the most efficient trade route to the sea for grain from Pannonia and wood from Slavonia. From the coastal towns, it was then taken to various other cities on the Mediterranean, including, first and foremost, Venice. Szavits Nossan, “Ceste Karlovac – Senj.”

status. In this difficult situation, the patrician layer in Senj redefined its role and developed various strategies to address the crisis. In the first part of this essay, I focus briefly on the narratives concerning this shift, including specific visions of the path to urban change for Fiume and Senj, and in the second and third sections, I focus on the solutions that were suggested.

As I shall show, the elites of Senj adopted strategies that raised the struggle of the town to national significance in at least two respects. First, Senj and the surrounding Lika-Krbava County became the core area of the Croatian Party of Rights, the main opposition force in the Croatian parliament (the Sabor)¹⁸ until the 1880s. The Party of Rights and its leader, Ante Starčević (often called “The Father of the Nation”), advocated for the integrity of Croatian lands and more political and economic independence for the country. The national movement thus found its most loyal voters and adherents in the area under investigation. Second, the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which was in almost continuous contact with decision-making circles in Vienna, Budapest and Zagreb, resolved to advance the cause of small-scale industry. The rescue of the handicraft industry seemed a prudent self-defense strategy for the industrial association of the city, which had been left out of the capitalist manufacturing industry and indeed had even had to deal with issues which had arisen because of abuses and mismanagement in this sector. This strategy was consistently represented at the national level with the mediation of the Zagreb Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

I have drawn primarily on articles from the local press, though I also examine the oeuvre of Vjenceslav Novak, perhaps the most significant writer of the region and age, as well as the documents of the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Due to the town's extremely limited opportunities to assert political interests, the chamber came to play a remarkably important political role too. Though no archives of the chamber survived, thanks to its active maintenance of ties and contacts with various decision-making bodies (the Royal Hungarian Maritime Authority, various ministries, the local government, the Zagreb Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc.), we have an array of admittedly scattered resources on the basis of which we can arrive at a relatively clear understanding of the work of the institution as an instrument for lobbying, to use a word from today's political parlance.

18 Sokcsevits, “A Horvát Jogpárt,” 35.

Perceptions of Senj's Loss of Position

Though at one point a flourishing hub for commerce and sailing ship-building and also an episcopal and a military center, Senj was plunged into crisis by shifts in trade routes and the increasing use of the steamboat, which slowly came to replace the sailing ship. Traffic on the aforementioned Josephina had begun to decline with the construction of the Trieste railway line, but it dropped dramatically with the completion in 1873 of the railway line between Karlovac and Fiume. As the table below shows, Senj had not recovered from the consequences of this diversion of traffic even several decades later. The city started to see some transitional improvements in 1905, due primarily to the strengthening of a single company, Hrvatsko parobrodarsko društvo, which was founded in 1902. Although the economic crisis of the 1870s and then the agricultural crisis contributed to the sustained decline in traffic, the major factor was quite simply the fact that Senj had lost much of its hinterland: areas that traditionally had transported their goods to the port city were able to reach Fiume more quickly and at less expense.

Table 1. Traffic in the Senj harbor, 1859–1910, tons/year¹⁹

1859	1862	1875	1901	1905*	1910
109,389	127,159	59,518	118,508	255,903	254,472

* Concerning the interpretation of the peak value of 1905, a comparison with Fiume is useful: according to the calculations of Márton Pelles, the total traffic in the Hungarian port in 1905 was 1,500,000 tons. Pelles, “Üzleti és nemzeti érdekek,” 158.

In the meantime, the steamship had completely transformed the world of maritime trade. The fleet of steamships was not only more reliable, faster, and able to carry far heavier loads, it was also very capital intensive.²⁰ It was precisely for this reason that the only shipping companies that were able to remain in business in the empire were the ones which enjoyed some form of state support. The Hungarian state decided to devote most of its support to two large companies based in Fiume: the “Adria” Royal Hungarian Sea Navigation Company, which was engaged in long-distance trade, and the Hungarian-Croatian Steamship Company (commonly known as Ungaro-Croata), which

19 Simunić–Brić, “Senjsko parobrodarstvo i socioekonomske prilike,” 124.

20 Ljubović, “Senjska luka i Jozefinska cesta.”

handled coastal shipping.²¹ The shipping companies which were entirely reliant on private capital in general, including the various consortia of Senj traders, were not able to compete with them. Steamships, moreover, could only be built in shipyards with adequate mechanical and financial resources, and the traditional shipyards, most of which were family businesses, went out of business one by one, not only in Senj but also in Fiume.²²

The transformation of traffic patterns and industry also brought about changes in the hierarchy of cities in Croatia. Most of the 17 settlements which were recognized as cities showed only modest growth in the Dualist Era according to all indicators of urbanization. In contrast, Karlovac, Sisak (Sziszek), Senj, and Bakar (Buccari) did not even enjoy modest growth. Karlovac and Sisak were adversely affected by railway policy, while Senj and Buccari by both the advent of the railway and transformations in the maritime sector.²³ In the case of Senj, demographic indicators offer clear evidence of this process, and not only in moments of stagnation, but rather as a trend in population decline which lasted until 1890 (see Table 2). Migration to the New World, a common concern for nationalists across the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, was proverbially the most striking phenomenon precisely in Lika-Krbava County.

Table 2. Population shifts in Fiume and Senj, 1869–1910²⁴

	1869	1880	1890	1900	1910	Growth 1869–1880	Growth 1880–1890	Growth 1890–1900	Growth 1900–1910
Fiume	17,884	21,273	29,494	38,955	49,806	18.95%	38.65%	32.07%	27.85%
Senj	3,231	3,039	2,785	3,182	3,293	-5.94%	-8.35%	14%	3.48%

Several of the documents of the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which was searching desperately for solutions to slow the population decline, offered diagnoses of varying lengths of the problems that the city faced. An 1885 letter to Ban Károly (Dragutin) Khuen-Héderváry²⁵ offered a dramatic picture of the situation of the city:

21 On the full spectrum of shipping companies and the role of the state see Zsigmond and Pelles, *A fiumei magyar kereskedelmi tengerészet*.

22 Gonda, *A magyar tengerészet*, 81–82.

23 Vranješ-Šoljan, *Stanovništvo gradova Banske Hrvatske*, 201.

24 *Ibid.*, 67, 121. Fried, *Emlékek városa*, 68–69.

25 The holder of title of ban was the highest dignitary in the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia. In the Middle Ages, the ban was the equivalent of a viceroy. In the dualist period the bans functioned as quasi prime ministers. They were appointed by the king based on the suggestion and under the condition of the

The city of Senj, which was known for its famous and very busy market on the Croatian coast not so many years ago, is facing a rapid decline in trade today and, and deprived of its greatest strength [...], the city fears that it will have an even darker future if some change does not save it from the fate of the other seaside harbors which were once engaged in trade but today are *dead*.²⁶

The contrast with the praise which was showered on Fiume in the Hungarian press, Hungarian literature, and Hungarian scholarship is striking.²⁷ Given their very different fates, the two Adriatic cities offered perfect examples of the bustling modern big city on the one hand and the traditional small town which was unable to keep up with its rival on the other. Of course, both smallness and bigness are relational and subjective. We use these categories as they appear in local narratives about the two settlements' fates, narratives which repeat the abovementioned clichés about modern urban living while also offering local modifications of these general visions.

One of the most elaborate among these narratives can be captured in the literary works of a Senj-based circle,²⁸ mainly in the writings of the most outstanding writer of realist novels in Croatian literature, Vjenceslav Novak, who was born in Senj. His 1899 novel *Posljednji Štipančići* [The last of the Štipančić line], for instance, offers the story of the decline of a Senj patrician family. Juraj Štipančić, the last son of this family, leaves the family house, and in Zagreb, he cannot “resist” changing his name to the conspicuously Hungarian name György Istvánffy. In several of his works, Novak deals with the problems of his “homeland,” narrowly understood, or in other words, Senj and the Croatian coast.

Particularly interesting from the perspective of this discussion, however, is the mental map that emerges from his works, a map on which the Velebit mountain range, which surrounds Senj, is essentially a line which separates two worlds. The mountains hold Senj, a town which is stuck in its traditions, in their embrace, isolating it not only from the rest of Croatia, but also from the

approval of the Hungarian prime minister. A controversial figure of the era was ban Khuen-Héderváry (1883–1903), often considered a great modernizer as well as an oppressor of Croatian nation-building initiatives.

26 Cited in Kolar, “Senjska trgovačko-obrtnička komora,” 163–64, my italics.

27 On the narrative which proclaimed Fiume the display city of Hungarian modernization and dubbed the city “the most beautiful pearl in the crown of Saint Stephen,” see Eszik, “A magyar–horvát tenger mellék.”

28 Other authors who deal with the same problems and work with roughly the same mental maps are Milutin Cihlar Nehajev (his novel *Bjieg* [Escape] is of particular interest), Milan Ogrizović, and Josip Draženović. The famous August Šenoa was also inspired by Senj's glorious military past and allure of resistance against foreign forces (*Čuvaj se senjske ruke* [Beware of hands from Zengg]).

rest of Europe and, indeed, the world. In Novak's works, Vienna, Bratislava (Pozsony), Prague, and London stand in sharp contrast to the seaside county, the marginality of which is eloquently captured in a Croatian word borrowed from Hungarian, the adjective "varmeđinski," an adjective which means something like "of the shire" and which comes etymologically from the Hungarian word "vármegyei," which could be translated as county but which has feudal and provincial overtones.²⁹

What a difference there is between a poor life by the sea and the swirling whirlpool of other human lives! [...] Here, man and nature are got to know from the songs and stories born by meager hearths, while there, the human soul besieges the peaks of wealth, the sciences, the arts, and cultivation [...]!³⁰

The spaces which acquired symbolic meaning as the embodiments or symptoms of backwardness and the absence of modernity were the closed interiors and ruins of houses that had either been abandoned or were being demolished, spaces from which the realms of fantasy were the only refuge (music, the sciences, or more precisely, the study of Darwinism).³¹ The Senj of the last son of the Štipančić line emerges as a town from which there is no escape, an insular city (surrounded by a literal wall) with only a narrow grasp of the world outside, a place of passivity and suspicious resentment of anything new. By using this small-town topos, Novak places the city of his birth alongside the small towns of Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, or even Chekhov. Thus, nostalgia and the critique of modernization are articulated with the help of modern expressive tools which fit well into the most recent literary trends of the time.

The novel about the small town also offers a portrayal of the slowness of life in the city. The sense of time standing still is again in sharp contrast with the world of the modern industrial city, in which the sense of the fast pace of life is one of the most salient elements, or the sense of rush and hurry,³² which is even more subjective. In the city of Senj as depicted in Novak's novel, in contrast, the

29 Čuljat, "Podgorje u pripovjednomu modelu Vjenceslava Novaka," 438. There is another Croatian word which means the same thing ("županijski"), so this use of this cognate from Hungarian was not a matter of linguistic necessity.

30 Novak, *Pavao Šegota*, 133.

31 Čuljat, "Podgorje u pripovjednomu modelu Vjenceslava Novaka," 439.

32 "[...] 'Hurry' as much as speed is intrinsic to modernity. We cannot conceive of modern society and modern capitalism without invoking, not just speed, but the desire for speeding-up, the fears and anxieties associated with acceleration [...]" Mackintosh et al., *Architectures of Hurry*, 2. For a contemporary perception of the phenomenon, see Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life."

bora (a strong north to northeastern wind) forces the denizens of the harbor town to take shelter in their homes, and it mercilessly tears the sails of the ships, much as it has for centuries. But this century is different from the previous ones, for this century is moving at a breathtaking pace. Senj's exclusion from all this, of course, is a loss only from a certain perspective. In the depictions of cities in the Senj literature and in some of the local press, traditionalism is an ambivalent concept which includes not simply elements of backwardness but also the preservation of values. In *Posljednji Štipančiči*, the lost golden age has an appealing allure, although the attempts to recapture this allure is sometimes caricature-like. The image of the city as a stronghold with a heroic military past which put up brave resistance to the Ottoman Turks and then flourished as a prosperous commercial center is clearly a lofty vision somewhat distant from the realities of everyday life. According to Valpurga, the mother in the ancient patrician family, the men of Senj were once a good head taller than the men of the city today, and the women took silver buckets with them when they went to the well for water.³³ Putting the caricature aside, Senj was home to the established patrician families which had founded, in 1835, the oldest reading circle and printing-house of South Slavic countries, and the other cultural institutions in the town or the active associational life suggest that, as a community, the city did indeed try to preserve genuine values.³⁴ Under the difficult economic circumstances that the city came to face, it fell on the cultural institutions of Senj (or to use the term which has become part of our parlance today, the civil sphere) to safeguard something of the city's positive self-image, and naturally this local patriot effort to maintain the town's identity turned to the more beautiful moments of the settlement's past for affirmation.

Radiša (Brave Worker), a Senj newspaper which was launched in 1875 (but which had gone out of print within a year), published a three-part series of articles entitled "What was the City of Senj Like Then and What is it Like Today?" by theologian, philologist, and grammar school instructor Ivan Radetić. The text strikes a nostalgic tone while also rebuking the denizens of the city who were incapable of moving and who even hampered the growth of the town, "moving in crab-like steps." Radetić writes with praise of the alleged virtues of the city in the past, including its cohesive power and the tendency to put the individual pursuit of happiness to the side in favor of the common good, a

33 Novak, *Posljednji Štipančiči*, 25.

34 A monograph has been published on Senj's rich history in civil organizations: Brlić, *Lička i senjska građanska društva*.

tendency which, Radetić claims, stands in contrast with the individualism of his era. In his assessment of the situation at the time, however, he does not blame the difficulties that the city faces entirely on external factors:

Because of Senj's position, it is destined to bring commerce to the sea. The sea has raised many cities, but Senj must always have been among the first. But today, trade in the city not only will not grow, it will decline. What is the reason for this? Perhaps the railroads that were built in the area. [...] The other cause of the crab-like steps which hinder the development of Senj is the population of the city itself. The old people of Senj were united in everything, they were brave, ready to work, and they lived together like a single big family [...]. But now! nothing but dissension, envy, hatred, and conflict.³⁵

In Radetić's narrative, selfishness and the rejection of anything new appear as habitudes the origins of which are essentially the same, habitudes which are caused by a narrow horizon and a lack of culture and cultivation:

With the exception of the few officials and the priest [...] the majority does not concern itself with the common industrial worker and merchant class. [...] People who have never explored the big world and have never striven to see it through different eyes cannot know anything of the development which is underway in the rest of the world. They sincerely believe that if their selfish and personal aims are achieved, everything is just fine.³⁶

Such people, Radetić seems to suggest, are easy to deceive, because they have no knowledge of the processes going on around them, and they see anyone who wants to bring about change as an enemy. Thus, the more cautious no longer dare mention "development," as they fear that if they do, whatever initiatives they may seek to take will be severed at the roots. The newspaper saw it as the mission of the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry to foster a sense of cooperation and to bring about unified, rapid action.

The image one gets of Senj on the basis of the various sources can be described, a bit summarily, as a traditionalist cityscape, with consideration, of course, of all the contradictions in this compound word. The symbolic counterpoint to the city of Senj was Fiume, the glittery, bustling harbor city,

35 Radetić, "Senj kakav je negda bio," 20. The *Radika* circle partly blamed the agitations provoked by the Party of Rights for the dissent, so it was not considered a radically oppositional organ of the press. Kolar, "Senjanin Josip Gržanić," 5.

36 Radetić, "Senj kakav je negda bio," 20.

which was seen and depicted as such in the spheres of public life in Hungary, in which it was celebrated as the triumphant result of modernization. However, if one considers sources on Fiume that are from the area around the busy harbor town, one stumbles across a very different perception of the city. In these texts, Fiume, which, in contrast with Senj, was enjoying dynamic growth and had been rapidly transformed, with significant state assistance, into a node in the capitalist economy, is not portrayed in unambiguously positive terms. In a memorandum that was composed in May 1886 and was sent by the Senj chamber to the Zagreb government and the Hungarian Royal Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce, the development which Fiume was undergoing is characterized as an exaggerated, unnatural, even harmful process. The memorandum called attention to the recurring problems caused by congestion because of the limits of the railway junction, which led to stockpiles of good that did not make it to their destinations, and it drew the following conclusion: “While Rijeka is, to put it in vulgar terms, *drowning in its own fat*, the harbors in Bakar and Kraljevica are declining dramatically because of lack of use.”³⁷

One finds similar perceptions of Fiume in sources from the city itself. In the periodical *La Difesa*, which was the first organ of the press published by the Italian Autonomous Party of Fiume (it was launched in 1898), one regularly found articles advocating the interests of local artisans and calling attention to the shift in the mindset of the city:

[...] When commerce with the sailing ship was flourishing, the people of Fiume were frugal, hardworking, and dignified. [...] The change in their mentality was attributed to the decline in the use of the sailing ship, and it was believed that they became vulnerable and easy to manipulate as a result of the tensions arising from the precariousness of their incomes and the unfavorable political events. This was the beginning, it was said, of the era of grand inaugural ceremonies, banquets, and political promises, which has lasted now for 30 (!) years. Those who call for autonomy complain that the benefits of the improvements

have been skimmed not by them, but by government confidants: small retailers and artisans are out of work and are compelled, in their penury, to rely on charity, and those who own ships are more likely to register their vessels in Trieste.³⁸

37 Cited in Kolar, “Senjska trgovačko-obrtnička komora,” 165 (my italics).

38 Ordasi offers a presentation of the problems discussed in the paper, as well as a summary of the source. Ordasi, “Egy betiltott kisebbségi lap,” 76–77.

Distasteful luxury investments, signs of excess, and the unhealthy inundation of consumer goods are recurring elements of the negative image of Fiume as the city increasingly came to dominate economic life on the Croatian coast. This narrative differs from the usual criticisms of industrial centers, which tend to focus on neighborhoods allegedly thronging with impoverished, penurious crowds and characterized by unsustainable hygiene and moral depravity. The classic formulation of the latter perception of the urban world is coupled in Lewis Mumford's work with a critique of the vision of industrialization as an indisputably salubrious development.³⁹

Because of the distinctive features of the local context, a narrative emerged concerning Fiume which differed from this classic understanding of the city. Due to the scarcity of space, the city never really had neighborhoods which were home exclusively to the working class.⁴⁰ Rather, for the most part, the industrial workforce commuted to the city to work in the factories. As new urban spaces could only be created by transforming parts of the sea into land, the square meters of space that were won through this process served functions both in the local industries and as symbols of the city's rapid development. The natural surroundings of the city prevented haphazard growth, as there were essentially literal barriers to expansion in every direction. Precisely for this reason, an interesting local variation emerged of the critical perception of the industrial city, which did not simply borrow or recycle the tropes of the anticapitalistic phobia of urbanization which, by then, were well worn and intermixed with several general commonplaces.⁴¹

This local variation complained more about the industrial port than about industrial neighborhoods. The widespread use of the steamship instead of the sailing ship was unquestionably a change which was met with a nostalgic-romantic sense of loss and an attachment to the old way of life over the new, even if the new was more efficient and more profitable. A Hungarian doctor on one of the frigates captured these sentiments in his description of the changes that had taken place (he also notes straightforwardly that steamships are simply ugly, as they ruin the cityscape with their chimneys):

39 Mumford, *The City in History*, 446–15.

40 Housing blocks for workers were built in the new industrial port district, but not to such an extent that they formed exclusively workers' neighborhoods, all the more so because of the fact that, due to the lack of space, industrial and representative functions highly overlapped in the new urban landscape. On this specific urban planning see Zucconi, *Una città cosmopolita*.

41 Bourillon, "La détestation de la ville."

As the navy slowly crossed the sailing ships off the “list” of vessels in its fleet, the age of chivalry faded and vanished just as quickly from the sea. [...] The mission of the armored ships is also beautiful and glorious [...]; but it does not attain the heights of the life of the now bygone era of the sailing ship, which was full of struggle, danger, sacrifice, and hardship, but which was, above all, wondrously beautiful.⁴²

In summary, in the first decades after the Croatian-Hungarian Settlement, the hierarchy of cities in the coastal region was completely rearranged, and this rearrangement led to new readings of Fiume, the city which emerged as the victor of this process, and Senj, which was one of the biggest losers. Both cities bore witness to dramatic changes, and these changes were met with sensitive reactions. Distinctive local versions of the capitalist critique of industrial cities were formed, as was a narrative of the “backward city,” which both bewailed the lack of modernization while at the same time placing emphasis on the alleged importance of preserving values from the past.

“Nest of Grocers, Tailors, and Cobblers” from a Sense of Inferiority to the Strategic Representation of the Craft Industry

The reference to professions in the title above is from Novak’s novel the *Posljednji Štipančići*. It comes from the mouth of the father figure in the book, and it has a decidedly derisive tone. It is meant as a characterization of the inferiority of Senj, a city in which one could hardly find any truly sophisticated representatives of the new urban class alongside the artisans whose professions are mentioned so dismissively. However, if one ignores the derisive overtones, the characterization is in fact a relatively accurate description of the social composition of the city. According to the 1900 census, the proportion of people who were involved in artisanal trades and commerce in Senj was very high (43.55 percent).⁴³ Since there was only one manufacturing institution—a tobacco factory⁴⁴ founded in 1894—in the city at the time (and initially it was merely a subsidiary of a parent company in Fiume), handcrafts and artisanal trades really did dominate the city’s economy. If one examines the situation in Lika-Krbava County as a whole, the picture is even clearer. Under the new county law passed in 1886,⁴⁵ counties were

42 Gáspár, *A Föld körül VI*, 9.

43 Vranješ-Šoljan, *Stanovništvo gradova Banske Hrvatske*, 103.

44 Despot, “Tvornica duhana u Senju,” 412.

45 Vranješ-Šoljan, *Stanovništvo gradova Banske Hrvatske*, 43. In contrast with the earlier county regulations (1870, 1874), this transformation was the subject of considerable discussion, as ban Károly Khuen-

required to submit a comprehensive annual report to the government with the most important statistics affecting the area. In the annual reports of Lika-Krbava County, under the heading "Industry," most of the time, one finds simply the comment that, "in the absence of a railway junction, there is no industry in the county," and the permits which were issued are listed, for the most part permits for small-scale industries (such as brewing).

Under the circumstances, the advocacy work of the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry focused primarily on two areas. First, the Chamber tirelessly composed innumerable submissions and requests for the construction of a railway junction and the modernization of the port, though to no avail.⁴⁶ Over time, it took on another role, mainly through the work of its most dedicated secretary, Sebald Cihlar. It undertook to protect small-scale, traditional handicrafts from the rise of manufacturing industry. The Chamber also sought to accomplish this mission at the national level. In 1884, for example, when the new law concerning industry was being negotiated by the chambers of commerce and industry, it was the Senj Chamber that pushed for the convocation of another national assembly to be held as soon as possible, where the only topic would be the protection of small industry. The assembly was indeed held, and several issues concerning industry were regulated. The Senj Chamber was given the task of developing regulations for certain professions (for instance chimney sweeping and tavern keeping). *Obrtnik* (Craftsman), the chambers' central Zagreb newspaper, regularly reported on the initiatives of the Senj Chamber.⁴⁷

A law on chambers of commerce and industry was passed in 1868 which applied to Croatia-Slavonia, and a similar law was passed applying to the Military Frontier a year later.⁴⁸ However, the Senj Chamber did not begin operations until 1876, making it the youngest of this type of advocacy body in the country. One of the reasons for the delay is found in the difficulties surrounding the

Héderváry followed political considerations and decided in favor of the reform in order to ensure electoral victories for the governing party. The county reports, which are held in the State Archives in Zagreb (Hrvatski Državni Arhiv), begin only with the reports from 1894.

46 The Chamber continuously came up with new solutions to the problems concerning traffic, which can be found in the archives of the Hungarian Ministry of Trade (MNL OL K 228). The requests which were sent to the Maritime Authority include one alleging an unfair competitive advantage for state-subsidized steam shipping companies (MNL OL K 228 70018/1892). One also finds a proposal of a Senj company to take over the transport of mail between Fiume and Senj for state aid (MNL OL K 228 58602/1893). The chamber calls for the restoration of the status of the city as a free port and for support for the use of sailing ships in commerce alongside steamships (MNL OL K 228 39583/1893), etc.

47 Kolar, "Senjska trgovačko-obrtnička komora," 160.

48 The chamber law was the Sixth Act of 1868 in Hungary and the Eighth Act of 1868 in Croatia.

demilitarization of the Frontier.⁴⁹ Senj sought to carry out the advocacy work to serve its own interests as a free royal city and as a harbor town, and it was less eager to accept responsibility for the economic problems faced by the communities in the border region. It was thus slow to establish a chamber. The second reason lies in the fact that the city of Bakar was also a possible candidate as the seat for the chamber, so the Senj patricians in the Sabor had to fight to protect their hometown's status. The issue of the location of the seat of the chamber was important in part because half of the members of the chamber were elected from among the denizens of the city which was chosen to function as the seat. Thus, these representatives would be able to keep local questions on the agenda, and they would be able to form a unified interest group within the chamber.⁵⁰

As an institution, the chamber “functioned as a link between the state administration and the practical world of everyday life, and the chambers served as legal representative bodies of the interests entrusted to them in opposition to the bodies of state administration.”⁵¹ In the sub-dualist system, Croatia had limited autonomy in its handling of its financial affairs. With the approval of the bans, lord lieutenants were put at the head of the counties, as a result they could not really put up much opposition. Given the lack of income, the city leadership hardly had any room for maneuver, so the various forms in which the chambers were able to represent the interests of the trades and the cities constituted the legal channels through which local interests could be communicated to the various organs which actually made decisions. The given organs had to respond to them, in contrast with the problems raised in the local organs of the opposition press.

In 1888, at the request of the Lord Lieutenant of Lika-Krbava County, Chamber Secretary Sebald Cihlar drew up a proposal to deal with the crisis in Senj which was also something of a summary of his ten years of work as a member of the chamber. Though he had previously been involved in the struggle for the modernization of the city's infrastructure,⁵² Cihlar clearly considered, according

49 The Military Frontier was a territory which served as a defense zone against incursions of the Ottoman Empire. The zone, which had special privileges and duties, was created in the sixteenth century and was abolished once the Ottoman threat became minor.

50 Kolar, “Senjska trgovačko-obrtnička komora,” 153–55.

51 Szávay, *A magyar kamarai intézmény*, 441.

52 One finds a request signed by Cihlar for, among other things, the deepening of the Senj port and the conversion of areas around the shore to firm land (MNL OL K 228 84102/1891), but the Maritime Authority also entrusted him with the task of preparing a comprehensive report on sea fishing (MNL OL K 228 38809/1894).

to this proposal, the preservation of the town's handcrafts and the improvement of the quality of small-scale production a priority, and he did not even mention the situation of railways and ports. He presented his position as a stance in favor of the preservation of values, which he characterized as necessary due to the aggressive expansion of large-scale industry. The crisis in the craft industry was a complex social problem, in his view, because a great wealth of knowledge and expertise would be lost, as would the dignity stemming from mastery of these crafts, a dignity (or to use his word, pride) which earlier had been characteristic of the denizens of Senj and which indeed had helped sustain them (he claimed) in the face of adversity.⁵³

After giving his diagnosis, Cihlar made four suggestions to improve the situation. First, he proposed providing a subsidy or loan of 15,000–20,000 Hungarian forint as a form of emergency aid which could be used by the “local industrial class” for the purchase and storage of raw materials. He also pushed to have the army become a permanent customer of the Senj craft industry, as “army orders would provide permanent business for artisans [...]. In addition, it would encourage [them] to unite, and together, they would be better able to compete with big industry.”⁵⁴ Cihlar also suggested that only artisans with a formal license should be allowed to work, as this would offer some assurance of quality control. Finally, he proposed the establishment of a vocational school, and he offered praise for the development of vocational education in Zagreb, which had been launched at the initiative of Minister of Culture Izidor Kršnjavi. Given the traditions in Senj and the potentials of the city, Cihlar recommended setting up a vocational school for the wood industry.

Calls for the protection of small industry in the face of cheap industrial mass production and its allegedly soullessly uniform production methods are hardly an unfamiliar phenomenon in the history of industry and urbanization. Camillo Sitte based his theoretical ideas concerning modern urban planning on this very notion of preservation of values, and these ideas, originally formulated in 1889, were made well-known by Carl. E. Schorske's dramatically influential essay concerning urban architecture in Vienna at the turn of the century. Sitte argued against the rationalized space of the big city and in favor of the city community created by the handcraft and artisanal industries (and therefore necessarily less monumental in scale). One of the very clear social implications

53 Cihlar's suggestions are included in Kolar, “Senjska trgovačko-obrtnička komora,” 169–74. Cited on p. 169.

54 Cited in Kolar, “Senjska trgovačko-obrtnička komora,” 170.

of this urban development project was the potential safeguards it would provide for the layer of people engaged in small industry, whose source of income was threatened by industrialization. Sitte's ideas were a source of inspiration for others too. Numerous antimodernist narratives which were critical of the big city drew heavily on his arguments.⁵⁵

What is most important from the perspective of the discussion here, however, is not the relevance of these considerations in the larger history of ideas so much as the simple fact that both the community of a small city and the administrative body which served as a representative of its interests came to very similar conclusions on the basis of lived experiences. They formulated a distinct vision of urban modernization which took local considerations into account, and they arrived at decisions concerning local interests independently. This bears an interesting affinity with the thoroughly-researched German context, where there was a clear parallel between the decline of the prominence and influence of small, independent artisans and the increasing emergence of a particular ideological-political posture of popular anti-modernism.⁵⁶

This autonomy suggests that what we refer to as urban modernization is not actually a single, uniform process, but rather a combination of processes which are at times different both in their emphasis and their pace. In the case of Senj, for instance, the town had far more intellectual capital than it did real capital (put simply, money). While the intellectual capital of the city paid close attention to the dynamics of modernization and even worked out alternative paths, attempts to bring real capital to Senj remained largely unsuccessful throughout the period under discussion. If there was a single characteristic of Senj which would throw into question the topos of the small town as a space of stagnation, it was its intellectual and cultural potential. The episcopal seat is a case in point. The four bishops who served between 1868 and 1914 were highly educated, broad-minded intellectuals who represented the grandiose heritage of the episcopate, which had been founded in the fifth century and had functioned continuously ever since. Juraj Posilović, one of the bishops, rose to the position of the archbishop of Zagreb. Another, Antun Maurović, had been the rector of Zagreb University before his appointment to Senj. The fathers of the other two (Vjenceslav Soić and Roko Vučić) were sea captains from the region.⁵⁷ Two future bishops grew up experiencing the decline of their fathers' social standing

55 Schorske, "The Ringstrasse," 29–31.

56 Walker, *German Home Towns*; Volkov, *The Rise of Popular Antimodernism in Germany*.

57 For short biographies of Senj's bishops, see Bogović, "Moji predšasnici biskupi," 140–49.

as well as the florescence of the intellectual climate offered by Senj's schools and churches. These figures show how a town of 3,000 dwellers can be a place of national influence and authenticity at the same time.

The grammar school (which stood out as excellent even on the national level), the very active work of the associations, as well as the literary life and organs of the press all show very clearly that the denizens of the town had access to an array of impulses that formed their economic and political imaginaries. In discussions of the complexity of modernization with regards to other settlements, it may be prudent to devote some study to the disharmonic movement between material and intellectual capital. An imbalance between the potentials of a given community and the actual opportunities it has may be a common feature of urban settlements which find themselves in the second row.

In the texts discussed in this essay, emphasis on the benefits of the handcraft industry is mixed with antimodernist views, or in other words, the advocacy activity of the chambers harmonizes with the critique of large-scale industry and capitalism in the readings of the city presented in the previous section. The case of Senj is hardly without precedent, but it has one distinctive and important feature. The main railway line, which bypassed Senj, was officially built by a "foreign" government, and Senj was separated from its rival (Fiume) by an administrative border. In the final section of the essay, I address the political implications of these factors.

The Success of the Party of Rights in Senj

It is gratifying that the Fiume periodical *Bilancia* has provided a prominent space for the publication [...] of last year's report of the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry. *Bilancia* has thus made clear that it is of the following view: economic expansion in Fiume has not played even the slightest role in the economic conditions in the territories represented by the Senj Chamber [...], and on the basis of the report, it was not capable of drawing any other conclusion than that the circumstances in the area under the jurisdiction of the Chamber are "regrettable and embittering" because the crop was bad.⁵⁸

The sense of indignation in the passage cited above was the dominant tone of *Novi List*, the periodical published by the oppositional Party of Rights in

58 "Izvještaj senjske trgovačke-obrtničke komore," *Novi List*, August 1, 1903, 1.

Sušak (Szusák, direct neighboring city of Fiume, and today part of it, at the time beyond the Hungarian border and thus belonging to Croatia)⁵⁹. The article captures the frustration with the failure to recognize the process which I have described in this essay: the concentration of capital in Fiume was one of the most important factors in the economic life of the whole region.

It was easy and, to some extent, justified to blame not only capitalism in general but also the economic policy of the Hungarian government for the lag in modernization. The struggle which Senj had waged for decades for a railway connection⁶⁰ and the similarly fruitless efforts to develop the harbor appeared as problems with nationalistic overtones. According to this narrative, the Hungarian government was discriminating against the settlements on the Croatian coast and had essentially usurped Fiume and made the city a tool in the service of Hungarian nation building. A discourse emerged under sub-dualism which strongly resembled the discourse which was often used by the Hungarian pro-independence opposition in the Austro-Hungarian context: among the peoples of the empire, the ruling nations were at an advantage in an unfair competition in which they controlled the imperial economy to promote their own interests, and in doing so, they prevented the other nations of the empire from developing and flourishing. The implication was obvious: the city could only hope to find solutions to the difficulties it faced if there were some change in the power relations among the major players in the larger political arena. The fact that the town of Senj and the surroundings remained an “oppositional nest” for the entire half-century of the Dualist Era is due in no small part to this insight, which also explains the fact that, by the 1880s, the area had become the most important base of support for the Party of Rights.⁶¹

The rhetoric of the Party of Rights never failed to include allusions to Senj’s bygone golden era, and thanks to the efforts of the politicians from the seaside who managed to gain some influence in the larger political framework, a circle emerged in Zagreb which represented the problems faced by the region. At the beginning of 1879, Andrija Valušnik, a representative of the Party of

59 On the importance of this satellite city see Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 27–29.

60 The struggle is described in detail, from the first proposal made by engineer Kajetan Knezić in 1829 to 1941, in Kolar, “Senjska željeznica.” Senj also offered alternative proposals after the handover of the Fiume railway, mainly thanks to the efforts of Sebald Cihlar, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, who called for the construction of a line that would connect Senj and Bihać and thus the coast and Bosnia after the occupation of the latter. As is well known, in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the concept of a Budapest-centered railway network prevailed, and in the end, Budapest was connected to Sarajevo via Brod.

61 The most comprehensive work on the Party of Rights is Gross, *Izgovorno pravaštvo*.

Rights, spoke up in support of providing the resources necessary for the proper maintenance of the seaside roads, and he noted the essential interests of the merchants for whom the railway was both distant and expensive and therefore also practically inaccessible. This issue made the disadvantages of the system created by the Compromise clear quite early on, disadvantages which included a cumbersome bureaucracy and the continuous transfer of responsibility to other administrative organs, as the Hungarian and the Croatian governments debated the issue of who was responsible for the maintenance of the roads in question for years.⁶²

In the 1880s, three elections were held in Croatia-Slavonia. In all three (they were held in 1883, 1884, and 1887), the city of Senj sent a representative of the Party of Rights to the Sabor. In 1884, the Party of Rights won in four of the nine electoral districts in the county. In the elections held in 1887, which were infamous because of the influence of Khuen-Héderváry (who used forceful tools to ensure that the ruling party would prevail), the victory of the Party of Rights constituted a particularly remarkable feat. After the electoral reforms in 1888, the party was unable to repeat this triumph,⁶³ but the seaside was still home to the aforementioned periodical *Novi List*, which was unquestionably one of the major organs of the oppositional press.

It is perhaps emblematic, from the perspective of this essay, that Josip Gržanić, who is infamous for having physically attacked the Ban in the Croatian parliament in 1885, was the representative of the Party of Rights from Senj. He is remembered today primarily for this dramatic episode, but perhaps more important from our point of view is the fact that he was socialized in the intellectual milieu (the grammar school in Senj) out of which several individuals who were later prominent as Party of Rights activists also came, including for instance Fran Folnegović, who earlier had also represented Senj in the Sabor.⁶⁴ Before he became active in national politics, Gržanić was the city notary, and as such, he did a great deal to further the foundation of the Senj Savings Bank. The creation of this financial institution was a fundamental precondition for the development of a capitalist economy in the region, which was difficult in part simply because the area was lacking in capital.⁶⁵

62 Turkalj, "Pravaški pokret u brinjskom kraju," 408–9.

63 Ibid., 419–24.

64 On this infamously dramatic scene but also, more importantly, on Gržanić's entire political career, see Kolar, "Senjanin Josip Gržanić."

65 Kolar, "Senjanin Josip Gržanić," 8.

Josip Gržanić was the leader of the Party of Rights in Senj in 1883, when, in the course of anti-Hungarian and anti-modernization disturbances a protest broke out.⁶⁶ The demonstrators painted over the bilingual Hungarian and Croatian coats of arms on the local customs office and then tore them down and threw them in the sea, cheering both Croatia and the Party of Rights all the while. The people who were identified, in the investigation which was launched in the wake of the protest, as the “principal culprits” and instigators were all familiar names, including Gržanić and Vjenceslav Novak, but also Ladislav Krajacz, who was perhaps the most esteemed wholesale dealer in Senj and also one of the founders of Ungaro-Croata and who served, between 1886 and 1893, as the major of the city.⁶⁷

The whole coastal region around Senj became one of the core areas of the wave of protests which were growing increasingly strident at the time and spreading to the villages, while the other major area where there were similar shows of discontent was the surroundings of Zagreb. This would suggest that the two large, modernized cities played roles in fomenting tensions and kindling sentiments of exasperation. In the case of the coastal region, the feelings of discontent could perhaps be explained the presence of nearby Fiume, which was seen as a display of Hungarian dominance. However, this would hardly explain the signs of frustration in the area around Zagreb. Thus, if perhaps cautiously, one could hazard the conjecture that, alongside the efforts that were being made to whip up feelings of national pride, the difficulties faced by these areas because of the transition to capitalism had a similarly decisive impact on the popularity and successes of the political opposition. This explanation seems all the more plausible if one simply takes into consideration the processes in question and the circumstances that shaped the fate of Fiume. It seems perfectly likely that Fiume would have come to play a dominant role in the region even if, in the course of the negotiations concerning the Compromise, the proposal made by the Hungarian side, according to which the city would have fallen under shared administration, had been accepted. Indeed, it probably would have risen to a position of prominence and influence in the region even if it had been put

66 The disturbances broke out following the violation of the Hungarian-Croatian Settlement of 1868 by Antal Dávid, head of the Zagreb Financial Directorate, who placed bilingual (Croatian and Hungarian) signs on the facade of the Directorate's building in Zagreb instead of the existing, exclusively Croatian ones. The uprising mirrored general dissatisfaction with Hungarian dominance. See Pavličević, *Narodni pokret 1883*.

67 Pavličević, “Senj u narodnom pokretu,” 38–39. Krajacz's career was shaped in no small part by the fact that his financial interests lay in Fiume, not Senj.

under exclusive Croatian control. Economic logic dictated that Fiume would develop very rapidly, regardless of the political constellation. The emergence of a capital intense structure (i.e. the development of factory industry and global commercial ties) radically transformed the network and hierarchy of the cities, raising some central places to new positions of dominance, while other cities, which earlier may also have flourished, would, according to all the indicators of urbanization, lag far behind.

Thus, the antagonisms which found expression in the discourses of nationalism were in fact fueled in no small part by the tensions created by modernization. There is, of course, an explanation for the conflicts which emerged which identifies ethnic attachments and passions as the primary factor, and this explanation was meaningful to the actors at the time as well. And yet both cooperation and conflict among the various (national) communities within the empire were also shaped to no small extent by the degree and pace of the processes of modernization which affected them.

This insight also furthers an understanding of the popularity of the Party of Rights among the denizens of Senj. It explains why the earlier-cited report issued after the events of 1883 identified Josip Gržanić as a figure with socialist sympathies.⁶⁸ In other words, the successes of the opposition should not be attributed entirely to the appeal of anti-Hungarian political agitation. Rather, it was also a sign of the discontent of a community which was not satisfied with the central government and which felt itself both excluded from the benefits of modernization and directly exposed to its many disadvantages.

Conclusion

My primary goal in this essay was to consider the regional reactions to the growth and development of the city of Fiume, which have only rarely been made the subject of scholarly inquiry or have been presented in the secondary literature as expressions of national antagonisms. The struggle of the city of Senj was significant in the local context, but it also offers an example of how a small city formed its own distinctive vision of modernization. It thus adds a layer of nuance to the image of a peripheral city which was seen, overly simplistically, as doomed to decline. After showing how industrialization and infrastructural development in Fiume shaped the fate of its Adriatic neighbor, I examined three

68 Ibid., 41.

phenomena that can be interpreted as responses to this transformation. First, two new understandings of the city emerged which drew on the experiences of the industrial city: one can be interpreted as a critique of the modern city, while the other was the image of the traditional city which suffered from a lag in modernization or which sought to shield itself from the drawbacks of modernization. The second phenomenon I analyzed, which was tied in part to these identity-forming narratives, was the decision by the community of the city to embrace and support traditional artisanal crafts, a decision which led to concrete lobbying efforts. This task was undertaken by the Senj Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Finally, I offered a brief discussion of the political consequences of the situation that emerged. Support for the political opposition in the region was fueled not only by the national issue but also by the socio-economic transformation. All three phenomena suggest that the social changes ushered in by industrialization and, within this, the emergence of industrial capitalism (which meant a more intense concentration of resources in a smaller number of communities) were for the people at the time part of a clear process against which, in various areas and at various levels, communities fought. Neither were the towns in the region around Fiume isolated from the changes which were taking place in the growing port city, nor were they merely passive victims of the transformations which were taking place in the emerging new world. Rather, these towns developed their own paths towards modernization.

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