

# TAKING TIME TO KNOW THE ISLAND

Multiple temporalities and changing mobilities on  
Dugi Otok, Croatia<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is based on the results of field research conducted on several occasions in 2020 and 2021 on the island of Dugi Otok, situated off the Dalmatian coast in Croatia. The article explores the notion of multiple temporalities emerging through the entanglement of spatial transformations, diverse forms of mobility and the lived experience of islanders. The concept of ‘multiple temporalities’ introduced in this article approaches these three aspects as heterogeneous temporal modalities that point to the coexistence and interplay of diverse, sometimes even opposing and contradictory, temporal rhythms. Inspired by theoretical and methodological approaches arising from the temporal turn while rethinking their potential in the context of Island Studies, the article focuses on the specific relations emerging from infrastructural development and the embodied experience of islanders. In order to grasp the complexities of what is popularly referred to as ‘island time’, the aim of the article is to show how processes of transportation development shape islanders’ experiences of time.

**KEYWORDS:** multiple temporalities, DugiOtok island, transportation development, mobility, island narrations

## Introduction

Over the last several decades, the question of time and how we experience it has emerged as an important topic, giving rise to the temporal turn in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Hassan, 2010). This emerging, new, interdisciplinary field of time studies explores diverse accounts of how we perceive, live and interpret time in different cultural and social settings, as well as how as well as how these settings relate to modern temporal orders and time-keeping practices established through the use of calendars and clocks. The assumption that time should rightfully claim its place in the Humanities and Social Sciences emerged after decades of an over-emphasis on space, reaching its peak with the spatial turn in the 1970s.

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The technological, economic, social, political and cultural transformations of the 1980s, alongside the emerging globalised world, gave rise to voices that questioned the notion of time as an absolute, abstract and universal phenomenon. Therefore, the temporal turn emerged in the Humanities and Social Sciences in the 1990s as an attempt to move beyond the predominantly emphasised spatial approach that had dominated them since the 1970s (Hassan 2010, p. 83). Scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds initiated a debate about time as historically rooted – as a social and cultural phenomenon with different rhythms, paces, modalities and articulations that can overlap and coexist with space and the body but can also contradict each other (cf. Elias, 1992; Lefebvre, [2004]). Alongside the inherited assumptions of homogeneous and singular time, which were part of colonialism (cf. Barak, 2013; Davison, 1993; Nanni, 2012) and, as such, were ideologically conveyed through processes of standardisation and time-reckoning practices (cf. Dohrn-Van Rossum, 1996; Ogle, 2015), the intellectual stimulus in time studies enabled the understanding of time as plural and dependent on external factors, continuously manifesting in multifaceted ways (cf. Jordheim & Ytreberg, 2021, p. 403). This scholarly interest in time has only intensified in recent years across various academic disciplines, such as sociology, history, pedagogy, urban planning and also anthropology and geography.

In terms of geography, time has often been conceived as the backdrop of spatial change and social transformation, perceived as ‘natural’ and ‘independent’ and often marginalised and subordinated to space (May & Thrift, 2001; Warf, 2008). However, as has been pointed out by geographer Tim Cresswell, the spatial and social are inextricably connected and mutually interrelated; therefore, it becomes misleading to forcefully separate them (1996). Although time has been recognised as an important aspect of understanding space, early 20th Century geographers carried on their research taking into consideration the linear, progressive and causal concept of time, or time perceived as frozen in cartographic representations “without the temporal noise introduced by process or movement” (Dodgshon, 2008, p. 1). Recent scholarly interests in time, however, remind us that understanding the link between space and time goes beyond considering time as the scenography of our spatial interactions. The historical and social production of time and space, along with its cultural variations, have been the focus of interest for geographer Barney Warf. In his book *Time-space compression: Historical geographies*, Warf traces the historical trajectory of how our perceptions of distance and interactions between places have changed due to the development of transportation (2008). Pointing out the emergence of a multiplicity of times and places that differ from one another in different societies (2008, p. 6), Warf advocates for an open-ended and anti-reductionist approach to understanding time that highlights the connections and interactions between places. Despite using the ostensibly misleading term “compression”, Warf aptly underscores the notion that space is, in fact, expanding due to the surge in social activities driven by increased mobilities and advancements in transportation technologies. As he asserts, “every round of time-space compression involves an expansion in the geographic scale of social activities” (2008, p. 6). Therefore, he argues that time-space compression must consider the political, perceptual, embodied, practical, symbolic and technological changes occurring over a certain period of time that could challenge our illusion of time as ‘natural’ and ‘independent’. He goes on:

*Time and space are struggled over, loved, hated, and perceived in countless ways, they saturate our immediate, daily, and lifelong existence so thoroughly that we generally don't even think about them... Time-space compression, therefore, invites us to avoid thinking of space as a passive surface and time as a linear arrow; rather, time and space loop around one another, fold in upon*

*themselves, and twist and turn in complex, contingent ways that can best be likened to origami. (p. 4, 9)*

On the other hand, anthropological perspectives on time from the beginning of the 20th century suffered from a similar time-blindness, as influential anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, W. H. R. Rivers and A. M. Hocart promoted their functionalistic understanding of time. As Nancy Munn's study has pointed out, the underlying assumption in their field research in Trobriand and the Solomon Islands was empirical, focusing on time reckoning in relation to seasonal activities, daily rhythms and social events (1992, p. 96). Recent attempts in the anthropology of time reflect a loose and dispersed approach among anthropologists, who reflect on the place of 'time' in the history of anthropology (Gell, 2021; Fabian, 1983) or problematise temporal phenomena and their cultural variance (Eriksen, 2001; Birth, 2017; Ehn & Löfgren, 2010). A lot has changed since the beginning of the 20th century, yet the inadequacy of our vocabulary to accurately describe the complexities of time and the troublesome need to address its entanglement with space have not evolved enough to fully capture these complexities. Our time-imbued vocabulary and the need to address the issues with time (or the lack of it) reflect the profound social, technological and cultural changes that have given rise to phenomena such as social media, shifts in work culture and the emergence of global mobilities, thus conceptually shrinking our world while, at the same time, temporally expanding it. When it comes to time and islands, the implications of the temporal turn should not go unnoticed in Island Studies due to the long history of exoticisation and essentialisation of islands (Gillis, 2004). As this *long durée* of Western imagination echoes into the present, the observation that "physical distance and temporal depth reinforce one another" (Gillis, 2001) becomes even more complex. If islanders make their own spatial practices and consequently construct a spatiality that suits them best (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 57), the question arises whether we should refocus our attention on temporal aspects as well so that we might better understand their complex relationship with space.

This article focuses on the island of Dugi Otok, off the Dalmatian coast in Croatia and the phenomenon of multiple temporalities emerging through the entanglement of spatial transformations, diverse forms of mobilities and the lived experience of islanders. We understand multiple temporalities as heterogeneous temporal modalities that point to the co-existence of diverse, sometimes even opposing and contradictory, temporal rhythms. We were inspired by Tim Ingold's notion of dwelling that presupposes the inseparable interconnectedness of space and time and the continuous flow of action and perception in our embodied experiences of the world. According to Ingold, temporality "inheres in the patterns of dwelling activities" (1993, p. 153) and should not be confused with chronology or history, which imply some sort of fixed or pre-given objective feature of time. For Ingold, temporality is relational and cannot be understood without taking into consideration the material world and our daily engagements with it. In the island context, multiple temporalities reflect the islanders' practical experiences of both time and space, their engagements with diverse rhythms and forms of mobility, as well as their intimate, embodied and tacit knowledge of the islands to which they belong. As such, we understand islands as locations in which multiple temporalities collide, synchronise and interweave (Crang, 2001), but also as places in which "social and material surroundings impinge on our very being" (Hayfield & Pristed Nielsen, 2022, p. 193). In many ways, the relational aspect aligns with Vannini and Taggart's notion of islandness as corporeally, affectually, practically and intimately experienced spaces (2013, p. 227). According to Vannini and Taggart, the "sense of island place, or islandness, is an outcome of what islanders do, and in particular how islanders move" (2013, p. 228). However, this understanding of islandness as a relational

and embodied practice is something we aim to further delve into by considering the notion of temporality, which is often overlooked in Island Studies. Temporality, typically perceived as something existing independently from human experiences of space, can serve as a heuristic concept in Island Studies. It has the potential to reshape our understanding of island spaces, the complexities of belonging and the notion of islandness and even challenge our preconceived notions of islands as isolated and exotic spaces. As the concept of islandness suggests, it's not "about isolation, but very much about connection, relying on a high degree of mobility and flexibility of island populations" (Ratter, 2021, p. 13). When confronted with temporality, islandness could open the door to a broader, more nuanced debate beyond spatialised approaches.

To understand the extent to which technological and infrastructural development on islands has shaped the lived experience of islanders and their experiences of time, interdisciplinary and theoretically stimulating debates arising within the temporal turn prove to be a fruitful area for reflecting on these complex relationships. The somewhat esoteric concept of temporality assumes a process in which our experiences of time are historically, socially and culturally shaped. The temporal turn that raised questions about the validity of temporal singularity was inspired by the debates initiated by postcolonial scholars about emerging temporalities that challenge the Western presumption of time as universal and linear. The work of Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Elias redirected attention to rhythm and highlighted the historically and socially conditioned interconnections between time, space and the body. For Elias, time is an abstract notion borrowed from the natural sciences, functioning as a symbol (1992, p. 29) that is socially constructed and undergoes changes in the process of civilization. Elias distinguished individual, social and natural time as three levels in the same temporal human perspective (1992, p. 46). Henri Lefebvre, well-known for his studies on the social production of space ([1990]), already indicated the importance of temporal rhythms of the body that "cross and recross, superimposing themselves upon each other, always bound to space" (1992, 205). In the book *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life* Lefebvre demonstrates how the question of rhythm is inseparable from the understanding of time. According to Lefebvre, "everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (1990, p. 15). Rhythmanalysis, as a theory and method, points to diverse practices and knowledge that create a multiplicity of rhythms – cyclical and linear – that shape our everyday lives. According to Lefebvre:

*In each of social practice, scientific knowledge and philosophical speculation, an ancient tradition separates time and space as two entities or two clearly distinct substances. This despite the contemporary theories that show a relation between time and space, or more exactly say how they are relative to one another. Despite these theories, in the social sciences we continue to divide up time into lived time, measured time, historical time, work time and free time, everyday time, etc., that are most often studied outside their spatial context. Now, concrete times have rhythms, or rather are rhythms – and all rhythms imply the relation of a time to a space, a localised time, or, if one prefers, a temporalised space. Rhythm is always linked to such and such a place, to its place, be that the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movement of a street or the tempo of a waltz. This does not prevent it from being a time, which is to say an aspect of a movement or of a becoming. (1990, p. 89)*

Temporality is therefore different from the notion of time that we use for time reckoning through calendars and clocks (Ogle, 2015, p. 10) and could rather be seen as a process that

is inevitably connected with our embodied experiences of space. As these experiences are always constituted at the intersections of space and time, they are inseparable from movements, mobilities and connections. However, by taking into consideration these spatial movements and embodied experiences, we approach the phenomena of island temporalities as relational and surpassing spatial limitations. Perceived as rhythms, temporalities are deeply embedded with mobilities, as they are, according to Edensor, “continually reinscribed on places and periods of travel en route” (2011, p. 192). Consequently, as they emerge, island temporalities are situationally and spatially produced in specific social and cultural settings. They simultaneously rely on the asymmetrical power relations that underlie allochronism<sup>2</sup> while also introducing diverse new temporal rhythms and whirls of time. We have decided to adopt this theoretical approach and understanding of island time based on the results of our previous research (e.g., Čuka, 2011; Čuka & Faričić, 2020; Čuka et al., 2020a; Oroz, 2020; Oroz, 2022) and by focusing on the experiences of islanders – their comings and goings from the island, as well as their definitions of isolation, mobilities, proximity and remoteness. The temporalities that emerge in this context to shape the lives of islanders are understood as empowering, as they can help us “decentre notions of the static island and instead emphasise mobile, multiple, and interconnected relational forms” (Pugh, 2018, p. 94). Island temporalities enable islanders to become creators of their own sense of time, allowing them to choose what suits them best while balancing between diverse temporal practices to structure their lives. In doing so, they adhere to the notion of ‘island time’, which is shaped by habits and routines. According to Vannini, the notion of ‘island time’ represents “the distinctive practice, experience, and discursive representation of the temporal quality of the region’s mobility constellation” (2012, p. 134). It is important to note that this perspective should not lead us astray by encouraging reductionist or essentialist thinking about islanders, which relies on outdated beliefs that have persisted for centuries.

Islands hold a unique appeal for researchers interested in the passage of time, as they are often popularly perceived as “time capsules” where time seems “out of time” (Gillis, 2001), where “spatial movement away coincides with a movement backwards in time” (Ronström, 2021, p. 277) and where time appears to be slowing down, stopping or following its own unique rhythm. However, this popular notion of ‘island time’, evoking “appealing and beautiful illusions” (Besse and Monsaingeon, 2019, p. 8), highlights the difference between islanders’ embodied experience and the perspective of occasional visitors. As noted by John Gillis, this perception is enhanced by those for whom islands figure as occasional stops, thus contributing to the appeal of allochronism by removing them from the kind of linear time that dominates so many aspects of everyday life (2001). Furthermore, the notion of ‘island time’, as has been shown by Phillip Vannini in his book *Ferry tales: Mobility, place, and time on Canada’s West Coast*, represents “simplifications and dramatisations of more complex social conditions” (2012, p. 128). For island researchers, the concept of islands being ‘stuck in time’ presents a challenge and problem, as it forces us to confront our own misconceptions about the supposed disconnection of time from space. Therefore, we approach island time as an entry point for understanding island temporalities, in which time is framed by the islanders themselves rather than being framed for the islanders. By taking a geographical and anthropological approach we will analyse, problematise and question the problem of island temporalities while focusing on the specific relations between infrastructural development and the embodied experience of islanders. We wish to answer

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<sup>2</sup> According to Johannes Fabian (1983), allochronism refers to the ethnocentric ideology of temporal progression that positions the Other in a time different from our own. Fabian closely links allochronism with the concept of denying coevality, considering it a central problem in anthropology.

this question that has frequently been overlooked, inadequately questioned and taken for granted, by taking ethnographic accounts as our starting point, which we will further deepen through a geographical and historical analysis of infrastructural transformations on Dugi Otok. Our objective is to gain an understanding of the daily practices of the islanders and how they perceive time in relation to the island space, mobilities both on and off the island, demographic changes and infrastructural transformations. By exploring the inextricable connections between these factors that make island temporalities, we hope to develop a comprehensive picture of how time is experienced, lived and conceptualised within the island community, but also how it relates to island space and islanders' perception of proximity and distance.

These lived experiences of time pose as a challenging research topic when confronted with the prevailing spatial aspects that imbue nissological scholarship. This becomes even more analytically intriguing when the 'subjective' experiences of time and 'objective' spatiality of islands are considered together, thus revealing the dismemberment of compartments that have traditionally disciplined our knowledge of islands and the complexity of life on them. The aim of this article is to face these challenges and disciplinary constraints by taking into consideration the experiential and relational approach when thinking about the interrelations between time, space and islands. This provides the background for our research. By moving away from the determinism that, in many ways, still haunts island scholarship, island representations and representations of islanders, we wish to contribute to the growing body of research that refocuses on the often-neglected aspects of temporality and the uneven relations between time and space in thinking about islands. Therefore, in order to reframe the frequently proclaimed agenda of island studies – thinking islands in their own terms (McCall, 1994, p. 4) – our approach aims at tracing historical, social, cultural and spatial processes that shape the multiple temporalities on the island of Dugi Otok.

## Study Area and Methodology

Dugi Otok island is situated in the outer line of the North Dalmatian island group. It is part of the Sali municipality together with the neighbouring island Zverinac, which is also inhabited. Dugi Otok has eleven settlements, seven of which are in the north-west (Veli Rat, Verunić, Soline, Božava, Dragove, Brbinj and Savar) and four in the south-east (Sali, Zaglav, Žman and Luka) (Figure 1). According to Croatian criteria, Dugi Otok can be categorised as a 'large' island (Zimmerman, 1997) due to its size of 113,3 km<sup>2</sup> (Duplančić & Leder, 2004). Considering only its population, it is a medium-sized island with less than 3000 inhabitants (Lajić & Mišetić, 2006). According to the typology that considers the number of settlements and connectivity with the mainland (Magaš, 1993), Dugi Otok is considered a large island because it has more than three settlements and is not connected to the mainland by bridge. The largest settlement and centre of the municipality is Sali, located in the south-eastern part of the island. Similar to other islands that belong to the Zadar island group (except Pag), Dugi Otok did not have the prerequisites for developing urban settlements, and its inhabitants, even in the past, have depended on functional and transport connections with Zadar, the nearest urban settlement on the mainland (Čuka & Faričić, 2020). This is why most settlements have rural characteristics. However, according to culturally specific and self-imposed unwritten rules, the rural-urban division does not necessarily correspond to statistical data. All the settlements on Dugi Otok are commonly referred to as *misto*,<sup>3</sup> which

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<sup>3</sup> In the local dialect, the term *misto* literally means 'small place'.

implies a combination of urban and rural characteristics. One example is Sali, where the urban character is particularly emphasised. Based on the spatial distribution of one's residence in the topography of Sali (often implying origin), as well as according to social stratification, some consider themselves more urban than others. Those living near the port are believed to be of noble origin and, therefore, urban, while those residing in the hilly part nearby are considered of lower status, implying their rural (agricultural) origin. Unlike other settlements, Sali has developed a fish processing industry, which was crucial for the economic and demographic development of that part of the island (Oroz, 2022, p. 26).

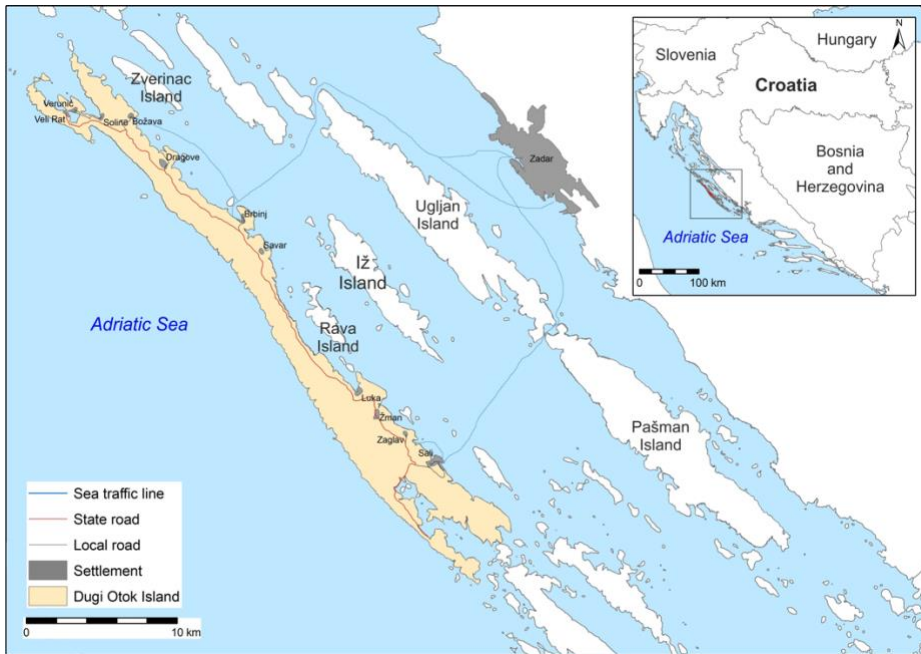


Figure 1 – The geographic position of Dugi Otok Island.

The socio-economic development of the island in the past depended on transport connections with the mainland and other islands. Dugi Otok settlements are predominantly rural, and islanders' lives were once linked to seasonal or daily work in agriculture and fishery (Faričić, 2012). The basic activities depended on meteorological conditions, the fishing season, lunar phases, the crop calendar and, in general, yearly agricultural activities. Therefore, lived experiences of time derived from natural rhythms and a traditional way of life (Oroz, 2022) in which temporal frames were conditioned by the natural seasonal rhythms that structured daily existence (cf. Eriksen, 2001, pp. 38–39). However, these temporal rhythms did not solely depend on weather conditions and seasonal peculiarities but were also largely influenced by the introduction of factory work time (Oroz, 2022, p.27) and the establishment of new traffic connections on the island and with the mainland. This especially applies to the introduction and changes in ferry lines or the building of new roads on the island. The establishment of regular boat connections and the introduction of factory work hours enabled the intertwining of linear time and cyclical time, which was reflected in the lives of the islanders.

Archive sources from the mid-19th century show that the town of Zadar on the mainland was the main major market where residents of Dugi Otok sold their products and bought everything they needed to live on the island. Goods and passengers were transported by fishing boats before the introduction of regular steamship and later ship and ferry connections (Beverin & Armanini, 2009). In 1892, a postal steamship connection between Zadar and Sali was introduced, and by 1900, six steamship stations were recorded on the island: two in Brbinj (in the bays of Jaz and Lučine) and one each in Božava, Dragove, Veli Rat and Sali (Municipal Dictionary of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1908). According to the results of the 1900 census, all settlements on Dugi Otok had a port for local transport (Figure 2), indicating the internal transport links on the island and the importance of maritime transport.

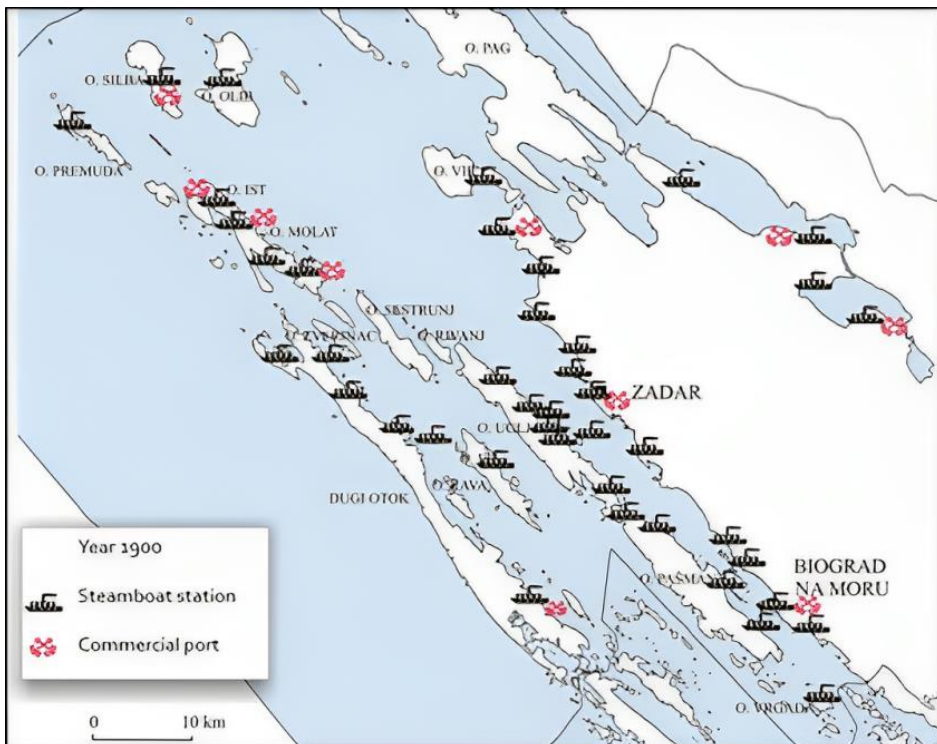


Figure 2 - Sea ports and commercial ports on Dugi Otok and neighbouring islands in 1900. Source: Made using *Općinski rječnik za kraljevine i zemlje zastupane u Carevinskom Vijeću*, 1908 (Municipal Dictionary for the Kingdoms and Countries Represented in the Imperial Council, 1908).

Božava and Sali had post offices, and Sali was already a centre for telegraph messages by 1900. In addition, Sali had a commercial port. An important factor in understanding the connection of the island of Dugi Otok with the mainland are the political changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that are reflected at the level of new shipping lines being introduced and existing ones being abolished. After World War I and the Italian occupation of Zadar, Dugi Otok established a shipping line with Šibenik and neighbouring islands. For example, since



1925 there has been a passenger and cargo line between the islands of Rab, Sali and Šibenik organised by Adriatic Shipping, while a line was established between Sali on Dugi Otok and Preko on the island of Ugljan in 1926 (Bakija & Bulić, 2013, p. 97). Consequently, such changes in shipping and ferry lines have either brought Dugi Otok closer to the mainland and other islands or made the distance greater. To understand the dynamics of the social space and assumptions about the formation of two social centres on the island towards which communities gravitated, one should not neglect the development of road infrastructure on Dugi Otok. For example, the construction of a road connection between the north-western and south-eastern parts of the island began in the early 1970s but officially ended only in 1997 (Magaš, 1993, p. 151; Bakija & Bulić, 2013). Consequently, small island communities on the island often functioned as disconnected and fragmented, as confirmed by the islanders today. Interviews with residents of Sali, in which they refer to “close” and “distant” places, often emphasise the importance of the islands of Iž or Ugljan as neighbouring islands with which they share close relations. These relations include social gatherings, participation in local festivities (especially for young people), family ties and fond memories. This sense of proximity and connection to neighbouring islands challenges the assumption that Croatian islands rarely form archipelagos, either geographically or culturally (Brozović Rončević, 2021, p. 210). Instead, the interactions and relationships between the residents of Sali and nearby islands suggest a stronger sense of island interconnectivity that could be characterised as occasional and situational, depending on the locations from which one embarks in such relations. Furthermore, this sense of interconnectedness between neighbouring islands does not arise from a strong shared sense of belonging to archipelagic networks, nor from an attempt to circumvent the administrative challenges associated with Zadar’s governance. Instead, it should be viewed as a result of historical, familial and friendly bonds among islanders who are “immersed in a sea of connections” (Ratter, 2021, p. 13). Therefore, while mainland cities may still play an important role, the interdependence between neighbouring islands contradicts the claim that Croatian islands are primarily self-sufficient and oriented more toward the nearest mainland city than neighbouring islands (Brozović Rončević, 2021, p. 210). Although the connection with the mainland plays an important role, it does not represent the only connection, and it should not overshadow the potential connections occasionally emerging among neighbouring islands.

By contrast, the communities and settlements on the north-western part of Dugi Otok (i.e., the same island) are often seen as spatially distant locations with which there was almost no communication or connection. Only occasionally, as a curiosity, some vague memories emerge dating back to a specific family in which islanders remember cases of marriages between locals from Sali and the village of Savar on the other part of the island. Considering that Savar is only 23 kilometres away from Sali in a straight line, such narratives and exoticisation when it comes to islanders from the north indicate to what extent spatially close settlements functioned as isolated and distant places. Such social and cultural fragmentation on Dugi Otok is often evident in interviews conducted with islanders who recall that their initial encounters and even friendships with those from the northern parts of Dugi Otok began during the Homeland War on the eve of the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991. More specifically, this trend started with the establishment of the Island Battalion, composed of volunteers from different islands eager to defend their island homes. According to these interviews, it often happened that islanders did not even know that their fellow soldiers, whom they met for the first time during the war, were from the same island.

For the purposes of this research, a combination of different methods was used. In the first phase of the research, open-ended interviews were conducted with members of the local

population in order to understand their lived perceptions of temporal rhythms. Nine islanders were interviewed, all of whom were permanent residents of the island. One of them immigrated to the island back in the 1970s when she started working in the fish cannery and the rest of them were born on the island and lived there all their lives. Our aim at first was to include the older population in our interviews, those who can reflect on the changes that have occurred in relation to technical and infrastructural development on the island. That is why the ages of the interviewees varied from 45 to 86. Three of the respondents were men, while six of them were women. This reflects not only the gender imbalance in older population groups but also an imbalance in the employment structure of the local industry. This, in turn, reflects the gender-based usage of time and the structure of island temporalities (cf. Oroz, 2022). As a result, questions related to jobs in industry have been crucial for finding out about the life rhythm of the islanders and to better understand the influence of industry to the development of the island.

Interviews were held on the southern part of the island at the end of October 2021 and early August 2022. For safety reasons, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were held in open space in accordance with the epidemiological measures. The research has been performed in accordance with standard ethical practices; we made sure to provide information about the aim of the research to all interviewees and assured them of confidentiality, which is why they appear as anonymous in the text without names, initials or age references. The research was approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Zadar. Interviews were semi-structured and informal, and a list of main topics was kept as a guide during the conversations. The main topics that were discussed included questions about the development of traffic infrastructure, the influence of the fish cannery on the island's development and the lived experience of islanders, life on the island before and after the introduction of catamaran lines and ferry lines, the difference between life in the northern and southern parts of the island and communication among islanders. Their reflections were combined with an analysis of previous research results and statistical and historical data. Additionally, the responses of islanders on most topics were consistent, similar or even the same, despite their differing settlements and age groups. In the second part of our research, historical and archival data were collected and analysed, providing insights into the socio-economic situation and development of settlements during the period before adequate connections with the mainland were developed. The analysis of more recent data involved processing the results of the census, which identified trends in the development of settlements with a special emphasis on the period after the introduction of more frequent transport lines to the mainland. The research aimed to distinguish, in particular, the difference in development between the northern and southern parts of the island and how these changes reflect on the lived experience of islanders in terms of their usages of time. One of the goals was to determine the extent to which this spatial imbalance was influenced by specific socio-economic disparities and the island's geography and to explore its connection with changes in the island's infrastructural development, particularly regarding the introduction or cancellation of ferry lines with the mainland or roads on the islands. Finally, our aim was to see how these changes affect islanders' notion of time and shape island temporalities. Therefore, statistical data were analysed separately for the two island areas – the northern and southern parts – based on the ferry lines that connect them to the mainland. Keeping in mind that these ferry-dependent communities on Dugi Otok structure their lives around ferry connections with the mainland, our aim was to understand the anatomy of their “love/hate relationship” with ferries (Vannini, 2012, pp. 252–253). These ferry lines not only shape their daily lives but also symbolise their sense of identity as islanders.

## How have perceptions of time changed on Dugi Otok? Results and discussion

The question of time on islands often elicits a variety of reactions in Croatia. For those planning an island retreat, the intersection of these two concepts – islands and time – can present a compelling idea that implies some sort of unique temporal horizon based on imagined isolation and remoteness. In the midst of our overcrowded schedules, which structure our daily routines and condition our sense of fleeting time, these utopian concepts offer an escape route to a carefree life, if only for the duration of a vacation. On the other hand, for islanders in Dalmatia, the story of isolation and remoteness provokes a sense of temporal exoticisation, figuring more as an annoying stereotype imposed by non-islanders than as an objective fact. Furthermore, these romanticised images of islands often fade away when the reality of local perspectives clashes with mainlanders' expectations. Whether it is changes in ferry and speed boat schedules throughout the year, limited education, medical care and job opportunities, infrastructural constraints or other challenges that set islanders' lives apart from life on the mainland, these factors can prove to be significant predicaments for those living on the islands as opposed to occasional tourists seeking out the Mediterranean sun. Needless to say, these temporal refigurations – whether imposed by non-islanders or nurtured by islanders in their own perceptions of hectic urban life on the mainland – are interdependent and mutually entangled. The concept of remoteness, as identified by Vannini, is understood as a “consequence of various factors such as speed, friction, route, motive, feel, and rhythm that shape a specific place” (2023, p. 6). This concept shows that both being remote and being connected come with their own costs. However, it also emphasises that in order to understand the place and its temporal dynamic, one needs to take into consideration the “constantly shifting mobility constellations that shape and reshape remote places” (2023, p. 5). Therefore, the temporal rhythms that emerge are composed of a “multitude of rhythmic combinations” (Edensor, 2011, p. 191).

In Croatia, the challenges of uneven opportunities for those living on the island and those on the mainland are often seen as a lost cause by islanders. However, on Dalmatian islands, these challenges are met with a sort of (self) irony and humorous remarks, as islanders embrace the ‘sweet surrender’ of facing the difficulties of living on an island. One important aspect of their lives is the profound solidarity that imbues their everyday life and transcends occasional and proverbial animosities. This sort of local philosophy embraced by islanders emphasises the belief that when faced with threats and hardships, providing help to a neighbour in need is regarded as an absolute necessity and a non-negotiable social practice that strengthens the social ties in the community. This local worldview reinforces social bonds and provides culturally sustained comfort in times of need or insecurity. Temporal rhythm, which depicts the slower pace of life, is often highlighted by islanders as playing a crucial role in portraying the better side of life on the islands. This rhythm, usually associated with a slower pace of time, is frequently reflected in local proverbs, greetings and conversations. The concepts of ‘being late’ or ‘being on time’ are relative phenomena, as they are grounded in historically rooted, socially accepted and culturally sustained local usages of time (cf. Oroz, 2022). The concept of time on the islands is shaped and deeply ingrained by a *pomalo*, or ‘take it easy’, attitude that serves as a cultural countermeasure to the ups and downs of island life situated between the fast-paced lifestyle of the tourist season and the slow-paced months that follow. “*Pomalo* usually ends conversations and is used instead of ‘Goodbye’... but it also means ‘take your time’, or ‘maybe now, maybe later’, ‘from time to time’, ‘take it easy’” (2022, p. 46). However, this attitude does not exempt islanders, who strongly resemble Levi-Strauss’s *bricoleurs*, from the need to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously, even though their carefree island attitude may seductively lead us to believe otherwise. Therefore, the concept of *pomalo* serves as both a social warning and a source of

comfort during times of haste.<sup>4</sup> To address the question of how time is perceived and practiced on islands, our analysis focuses on the interplay between the lived experiences of islanders, mobilities and the material reality that shapes their temporal frameworks. To highlight the complex relationship between time and space, and to make the elusive nature of the concept of time more understandable to our interlocutors, we focused our conversations on the physical transformations of the island landscape resulting from infrastructural changes and the changing system of mobilities. This enabled us to understand how new practices of mobility emerged when new roads and ferry lines affected locals' perceptions of spatial distance, triggered their usage of time and intertwined with their personal, familial and generational histories.



Figure 3 - Sali on Dugi Otok Island. (Photo by Boris Kačan, Tourist board of Sali).

Our casual and informal approach to interviews was accepted, to some extent, and provoked various responses. However, it was also met with exaggerated stories, provocative remarks and 'sweet lies' intended to complicate our task, as they attempted to outwit the 'book smartness' they associated with us. However, whenever the conversation turned towards the subject of ferry connections with the mainland, or the time of lunch, the speaker would briefly pause their subtly preachy tone and provide accurate information to their listener.

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that *pomalo* should not be seen as an exclusive island phenomenon, as it permeates everyday practices more broadly in the region of Dalmatia. However, the goal of this article is to shed light on how this phenomenon is articulated in the island space marked by the specific social, cultural and historical transformations that affected it.

Although nobody ever knew whether the post office was open or not, or if people were at home or working in the fields, in cases of ferry schedules or lunch, the proverbial humour and local shenanigans would quickly disappear, and punctuality would kick in. This planning of life around ferry schedules shows that they form what Vannini refers to as “familiar mundane maneuvers” as they revolve around habits and routines that shape island temporalities (2012, p. 134). Even today, the distance to the mainland is not measured in kilometres or nautical miles, but in the time spent on boats sailing along the “essential lifeline routes” (Mendas, 2015, p. 11). Departure and arrival times figure as paramount, and the weather forecast plays a crucial factor in determining whether the journey will be “fast” or “slow”, even though the journey, in minutes, is always about the same.

After several interviews, our impression was that local experiences of time and space on the one hand, and the infrastructural development and traffic connections on the other, are mutually interrelated. From the perspective of islanders in Sali, the development of sea traffic and the establishment of a fish cannery were seen as the primary catalysts for social change and the emergence of multiple temporalities on the island. This went hand in hand with the demographic decline, which particularly affected the northern parts of the island (cf. Babić, Lajić & Podgorelec, 2004) that were not nearly as accessible by local roads from the factory. According to our interlocutors, the notion of time radically changed when the factory was opened, while the changes it made only intensified in the second half of the 20th century via the development of tourism (Oroz, 2022). All these changes contributed to a significant disparity in socio-demographic development between the two parts of the island, ultimately giving rise to multiple temporalities and resulting in the perception of a single island as two separate entities:

*We were fortunate that the factory did what it did. People stayed here because of it. Even the nearby villages... like the women from Zaglav, walked to the factory in Sali, and the women from Žman did the same. The boats went there, but they couldn't set sail from the north-western part of the island. It was far away. These parts of the island were like another island, and their people emigrated.... So only a small number of the people stayed there. They almost completely disappeared... almost disappeared.... Here, the population stayed pretty much the same because of the factory.*

*What was the connection with the north like? None, none at all. We didn't even know the island until the road was built. Maybe we went by boat to Rava Island. On the island, there weren't any roads. Only unpaved roads for animals. We didn't use boats to get around the island, and we didn't know anyone there in the north. It was a completely different world for us. It was easier to go to Australia and America than to Veli Rat and Zverinac [in the north], and I don't know how people got around there... I didn't even know those people existed. I mean, maybe I had heard of it... but even the boats didn't go there from here.*

In the second half of the 19th century, all the settlements except Sali had fewer than 300 inhabitants and were very similar in terms of their demographic and economic structure. Up until the turn of the 20th century, there were more inhabitants living in the north-western settlements than in the south-eastern, primarily due to the well-developed agriculture and fishery in that region (Figure 4).

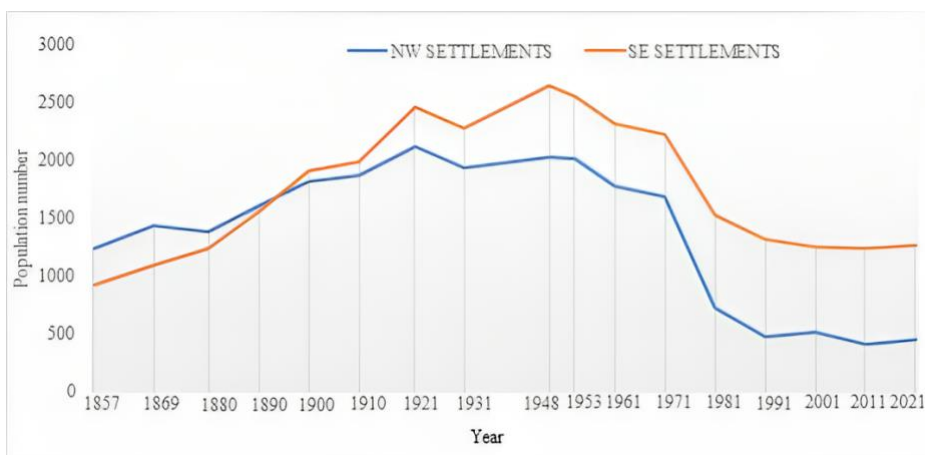


Figure 4 - Population number in north-western and south-eastern settlements of Dugi Otok Island from 1857 to 2021. Source: *Naselja i stanovništvo Republike Hrvatske – Retrospekt 1857. – 2001.*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2005; *Population According to Age and Sex, Census 2011, Census 2021*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics.

After the opening of the fish cannery in 1905 (Beverin & Armanini, 2006) the south-eastern part of the island, especially Sali, experienced economic and demographic growth. Thanks to the fish cannery, workers from the settlements of Zaglav, Žman, Luka and Sali were employed and the depopulation<sup>5</sup> on the south-eastern part of the island was somewhat more moderate than in the north-west. The narratives of island women who worked in a fish processing factory in Sali during the socialist period of the late 1960s highlight the ambivalences that are essential to understanding life on the island, island demographics, spatial-temporal relations and notions of belonging. On the one hand, working in the factory was presented to us as a kind of lifesaver for the southern part of the island, perceived from the perspective of predominantly rural communities as the main reason for preserving the local communities and keeping families together. Such salvation came at a certain cost, as it included travelling several kilometres to get to the workplace every day, invariably on foot. Only in the last 30 years, with the development of transport, as places in the southern part of the island became better connected, were such journeys made easier. On the other hand, this was a kind of blessing in disguise because poor or almost non-existent traffic connectivity with the north-western part of the island led islanders from those settlements to emigrate to countries overseas. The opening of the fish cannery at the beginning of the 20th century corresponded with the appearance of phylloxera, which destroyed most of the vineyards (Čuka et al., 2020a). The subsistence of many families depended on wine production, so the spread of the wine disease started a big emigration wave (Čuka et al., 2020b) that affected communities in the north-western part of the island. Even today, passing through the settlements north of Luka, one can notice the almost empty streets during most of the year, which pay witness to the history of those small settlements that were affected by rapid depopulation (Čuka, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> In the north-western part of the island, the highest population number was recorded in 1921 (2120 inhabitants) while in the south-east this happened in 1948 (2646) (Figure 4).

After the Second World War, job opportunities in the industry were not enough to keep young people on the island, and after 1948 all settlements were facing demographic decline due to intensified emigration (cf. Podgorelec & Klempić Bogadi, 2020, pp. 89-101) (Figure 4). One of the reasons for this was the industrial modernisation in the former Yugoslavia, which peaked in the late 1960s, and, according to some interlocutors, even political instabilities played a role. With the economic development of Zadar, there was a sharp decline in the number of inhabitants on the island due to increased emigration towards the mainland. Therefore, it is not surprising that the period between 1971 and 1981 recorded the largest depopulation (-42.6%) on Dugi Otok, but it did not affect all settlements equally. During this period, a considerable number of young individuals left the island and ventured to the mainland in search of employment opportunities. At the same time, the Sali fish canning factory was facing a significant shortage of labour, leading to the immigration of workforce from the mainland. However, the need for factory workers and the establishment of new ferry connections enabled some individuals to make the island their home, despite not being from the island. From 1972 to 1979, the fish canning factory hired almost 200 workers, mostly females, who came from the mainland (Beverin & Armanini, 2006). Many of them remained on the island and started families, but this never fully mitigated the dramatic demographic decline that was affecting the island. The reasons for the depopulation, in addition to underdeveloped transportation infrastructure and the general economic decline (Magaš, 1997), need to be sought in social changes and generally in the differences between rural and urban lifestyles. Significant changes in secondary education occurred during the latter half of the 20th century, particularly after 1970s. With the increase in the number of young people who go to secondary school on the mainland, there is also an increase in the number of those who no longer want to return to small island communities that are insufficiently equipped with social amenities. According to the 2021 census data there were 1691 inhabitants on the island (*Population According to Age and Sex, Census 2021, Croatian Bureau of Statistics*). Most of them (73.5%) were living in four settlements in the south-east.

*Isn't the island much better connected now? You can go wherever you want every day. Younger people often give rides to the elderly if they're willing to. They now come to Tommy's [the only larger store on the island] because Sali is the centre. There is no public transportation from the north. But it's strange to me that there isn't even a bus that goes all around the island when the ferry arrives. Instead, people trade rides if they have a private car.*

*I don't even feel that distance... before, you would want to go to the city, but now I don't miss that city on the mainland at all because of the four lines, you can go whenever you want.*

*Nowadays, our connections are not that bad, they are actually good. It seems like the island is much closer to the city.*

*On the boat, we used to pass the time chatting. The boat was filled with smoke from cigarettes and smoking, but it was interesting. Then us younger ones would go to the front of the boat. There was a small salon there, and that's where we young people hung out while older males in the other salon played cards. Nowadays, it's all about mobile phones, and everyone is preoccupied with their own devices. It's sad. I enjoyed life more in the past, with socialising, letter writing and hanging out with friends. Nowadays, there is very little of that.*

The long-term spatial isolation of the north-western settlements in relation to those in the south-eastern part of Dugi Otok has led to a strong polarisation between the two areas, as if the island's social space has practically split in two. In 1970, Dugi Otok was connected to the mainland and other islands six days a week throughout the year (Kos, 1974). However, due to the specific location of the island's settlements and the need for faster and better connections to Zadar, separate maritime traffic was organised for the northern and southern parts of the island. There was no sea connection that linked all the island settlements. This specific situation, in which there was no public connectivity between the north-western and south-eastern parts of the island, remains a factor affecting the pace of development in the two regions. Furthermore, even the bus lines established in the following years never fully replaced the distinctive differences and dynamics of the communities living on opposite ends of the island. Today, although the bus lines are fully operational, the perception is that they are still unreliable, and locals do not usually rely on them to be as punctual as the ferries. Consequently, the island settlements and small communities lack direct communication between each other, relying instead on Zadar on the mainland.

The social spaces constituted around the two island centres – Božava in the north and Sali in the south – resulted in what Čuka refers to as “two islands within one” (Čuka 2011, pp. 169, 271). The gravitational influence of Sali is relatively weak and extends only north to the settlement in Luka, thus making the degree of economic and demographic development of island settlements inversely proportional to the distance from the municipal centre (shorter distance → higher degree of development and vice versa). When considering the structurally shaped disparities between the two parts of the island, the question of belonging to the island is analytically intriguing because it manifests differently in these two parts of the island. In the northern parts, this question is articulated through the metaphor of the ‘island disappearing’, which points to the shrinking of island social space as a result of migration processes and the depopulation of the large communities that were common in the past. The notions of belonging are shaped by the migration trauma that even today haunts the narratives of islanders. On the other hand, the question of belonging in the southern parts of the island revolves around the unwritten rules of one's origin, as most of the locals are present – occasionally or permanently – in the settlements. In terms of the diverse temporalities structuring around these two parts of the island, they emerge as seemingly different but, in many ways, they overlap and intertwine. They are not only structured around the island space and ‘being there’ but also within the broader frame of island spaces that are being constituted in terms of movement, thus making remoteness a relative phenomenon.

According to Hayfield and Pristed Nielsen, rootedness and belonging are viewed as heterogeneous and translocal in a mobile society that does not neglect the notion of place or territory, but rather considers it as only part of the process, especially in the case of island spaces when taking into consideration movements across the sea (2022, p. 193). In light of the constant mobilities from the island to mainland and vice versa, we understand remoteness in Vannini's view as a changing phenomenon that arises from the “entanglements of mobility and connectivity” or as an “emergent and shifting configuration of multiple and constantly evolving connections and disconnections” (2023, p. 1). Whether it's about the time spent on ferries that enable islanders to commute as they couldn't on the island, or the intensity of ferry connections that makes them think the town is closer to the island than it actually is, island temporalities pose as fragmented and scattered but, at the same time, glued together by the cultural practices that broaden islanders' sense of belonging well beyond the physical island space. Instead, island temporalities emerging on the southern parts of the island reflect the broader web of spatial and social relations (cf.



Ratter, 2021, p. 13). These emerging social spaces, which made islanders aware of their proximity to the mainland, were formed around connections and movements to and from the island that take into consideration the sea and the mainland (cf. Nimführ & Otto, 2020, p. 187) as part of the equation of what it means to be an islander. The diverse temporal rhythms associated with these two parts of the island share a legacy of poor road connections that have shaped the practices of the islanders, despite the present situation and the existence of a good road. The disassociated nature of these parts of the island is now bypassed by the connection with the mainland, enabling the emergence of new social spaces that affect the islanders' perception of time in relation to hectic urban life. This traps the island within the network of the (sub)urban archipelago (Čuka & Faričić, 2020). If the island is defined as a geographical space surrounded by the sea, without taking into consideration the mainland factor as a form of urban bypass that shapes the everyday life of islanders, this can lead to false presumptions that still contribute to the romanticised image of the island as an isolated entity. However, when we approach the island space as a network of social, cultural and temporal rhythms entangled in the meshwork of island-mainland relations, our understanding of the island avoids the trap of essentialisation and helps us to understanding it on its own terms.

## Conclusion

Dugi Otok experienced a long-lasting process of emigration caused by a crisis in agriculture at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by inadequate economic development and lack of infrastructure. However, even on such a relatively small area, two different parts of the island were marked by varying degrees of these negative economic and demographic processes. The development of transportation played a crucial role in the islanders' lives. Alongside industry, transportation brought about changes in their perception of time and their daily rhythms. In the article, we aimed to highlight the significance of the development that went in two different directions and resulted in the different ways islanders perceive themselves and their notions of time. On the one hand, the fish canning industry on the southern shores of the island helped prevent emigration and provided an economic boost that helped islanders face hardships and avoid emigration. As a result, roads and ferry connections stirred by the emergence of the factory resulted in an overlap of factory-structured time and agricultural time. These diverse temporal rhythms were largely dependent on factory work time and weather conditions, but they were also influenced by the introduction and the establishment of boat connections with the mainland. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these entangled temporalities were intensified by the development of season-related tourism. The overlapping of linear time made island life appear more similar to the life of people on the mainland, while the establishment of faster connections created a sense of the island drawing closer to the mainland. However, later on the factory became a factor that made the islanders feel trapped in a stagnated state, both spatially and temporally. That is why nowadays there is a lack of local workforce, leading to the necessity of importing labour from underdeveloped countries. On the other hand, the northern and north-western parts of the island have experienced different developmental paths that have resulted mostly in emigration from the island. Poor road connections with the southern parts and changing ferry lines with the mainland have facilitated the emergence of a different kind of temporality shaped by stagnancy and ferry-related temporal rhythms. Essentially, this situation has resulted in the island functioning as two fragmented, geographically disconnected areas.

The concept of multiple temporalities introduced in this article does not imply the existence of some sort of normative time against which differences are detected as some sort of anomalies, nor does it assume esoteric understandings of time that will help to despatialise island research and inadvertently contribute to the further exoticisation of islands. On the contrary, we see multiple temporalities as relational phenomena that can enrich our understanding of primarily spatialised approaches to island research and thus open up questions of the interrelationship between space and temporality, the social production of time and the different rhythms and dynamics that characterise the lived experience of islanders. While advocating for the plural understanding of spaces and times and their processual nature (Kavanaugh, 2010, p. 8) we used the concept of multiple island temporalities to highlight the need of understanding the complexities of island life while facing the challenges that are by no means separate from global processes. From deeply ingrained stereotypes of islands as isolated in time and space that invoke the rhetoric of a sharp contrast with modernity to contemporary cultural practices where the local perspective challenges hegemonic discourses of exoticisation, the concept of multiple island temporalities redirects the debate about islands toward differences that can be seen as complementary rather than irreconcilable. In the broader geographic, social and cultural context of the Mediterranean and its intersections with Southeast Europe and its belated modernity, such concepts can deepen our understanding of the links between local and culturally specific responses to global challenges.

After a thorough analysis and reflection on the complex relationships between the technological and infrastructural development of Dugi Otok island and its relations to time and the lived experience of islanders, we have reached the conclusion that diverse temporalities within the island itself should not be seen solely through the prism of the island's confined physical space but rather through the island's social space and the many ways in which these spaces are constituted. Whether it is through ferries, transnational spaces where islanders meet and share their sense of belonging or on the island itself, island temporalities emerge as changing, fluid and constituted of temporal fragments that reflect linear time, time-reckoning practices, weather conditions, seasonal tourism-related activities and circular agricultural practices. Island temporalities, as we see them, figure as relational phenomena and an important aspect in understanding the ongoing processes of belonging and the formation of island time. They must take into consideration the roads and boat lines as material manifestations of emerging social spaces, as these play an important role in comprehending the processes that shape the temporal lifelines of island communities.

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