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“LOCKED IN: THE SILENT SIEGE OF DUBROVNIK BY THE TOURISM INDUSTRY”

This thesis argues that Yugoslavia and an independent Croatia used Dubrovnik’s cultural heritage to define and substantiate themselves as they emerged from political upheaval, disrupted economies, and nascent institutional foundations and thus firmly embedded the tourism industry within their political economies as more than an economic tool.

Through the tourism industry, the cultural heritage of Dubrovnik played a fundamental role, symbolically and economically, in their process of nation building. As an emblematic site of historic and national significance, Dubrovnik represented the freedom and wealth of culture that both Yugoslavia and Croatia as new unsteady political institutions sought to evoke.

Within bolstering the tourism industry, Yugoslavia and Croatia cultivated Dubrovnik’s path dependency in the sector, which resulted in its contemporary “lock-in” and mono-economy. This study of Dubrovnik will elucidate the role of path dependency in shaping Dubrovnik’s economy, political actors, and social fabric, while portraying the extent that tourism has pervaded throughout all spectrums of society and distorted its local heritage.

Thus, I seek to answer the following questions:
- How did the State’s focus on the tourism industry as an economic and political engine engender Dubrovnik’s path dependency in the sector?
- How does Dubrovnik’s lock-in the tourism industry represent the State’s failure to regulate the industry?
- How does a lock-in the tourism industry facilitate the erosion of a site’s cultural heritage?

Using Dubrovnik as a case study to answer these questions, this research will evaluate path dependency’s potential use as an ex-ante planning and preservation tool to predict if a state is advancing towards an irreconcilable lock-in and how to intervene if it does. Path dependency makes meaningful intervention all the more difficult, because it increasingly diminishes the agency of political actors to switch paths. Therefore, as will be demonstrated, planners need to increase means for effective participatory planning to counter a potential lack of political will that can prevent developing alternative, more optimal paths.