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Making Second Imperial Cities: Modern Ports, Colonial Connectivity, and Maritime Globalization

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1. Introduction

The late 19th century witnessed the creation of a network of port cities as global and imperial hubs. These cities did not only grow physically, they also became politically and economically more significant, both in Western Europe and worldwide. Here, processes of urbanization, globalization, imperial expansion, and industrialization intertwined.² The ports did not simply keep pace with the “transformation of the world”³, they set the pace. With the exception of London, Europe’s largest port cities were not capital cities.⁴ In the period of high imperialism in the 1880s until decolonization in the 1960s, they became “second imperial cities”, as I will argue in this article. The phrase “second imperial cities” raises at least two questions:

Firstly, *what is an “imperial city”*? Imperial cities point to the multiple ways in which “empires marked urban cultures as well as architecture, institutions, and economies”.⁵ The imperial city features frequently in the literature listing

¹ This work was supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) within the International Graduate Research Program Berlin/New York/Toronto “The World in the City: Metropolitanism and Globalization from the 19th century to the present” based at the Technische Universität Berlin. Earlier versions of this paper were presented as a contribution to the conference “Imperial Port Cities in the Age of Steam. Towards a Comparative History of Entanglements” co-organized by Lasse Heerten and Daniel Tödt at the Center for Metropolitan Studies (TU Berlin) and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in July 2016, and to the Panel on “Second Cities” at the 13th International Conference on Urban History, in Helsinki, in August 2016. For advice and critical comments, I would like to thank Lasse Heerten, the anonymous reviewers, and all the participants of the above mentioned events who shared their ideas with me. I also would like to thank Melina Kremakova for her final corrections.

² For a comprehensive discussion of these issues, see Lasse Heerten, *Ankerpunkte der Verflechtung. Hafenstädte in der neueren Globalgeschichtsschreibung*, in: *GuG* 43/2017, pp. 146–175.

³ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton, 2014.

⁴ Carola Hein, *Port Cities*, in: Peter Clark (ed.), *Oxford Handbook on Cities in History*, Oxford/New York 2013, pp. 809–827.

⁵ Andrew Lees/Lynn Hollen Lees, *Cities and the Making of the Modern Europe, 1750–1914*,

metaphors and characterizations in order to define different typologies of modern cities, such as the “industrial”, the “colonial”, or “global city”.⁶ According to Jürgen Osterhammel, the imperial city can be defined as “the ruling metropolis [...] a political command center, a collection point for information, an economically parasitic beneficiary of asymmetrical relations with its various peripheries, and a showplace for emblems of the dominant ideology.”⁷ Studies on imperial cities therefore deal with early modern Lisbon, Amsterdam, and Istanbul, or with London, Paris, Vienna, Rome, Brussels, Tokyo, and Berlin in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁸ These scholars are primarily concerned with the visible and hidden imperial traces in urban spaces, such as public monuments, or discuss the concentration of political, scientific, economic, social, and financial institutions that enabled and spurred imperial connections.

These cities could just as well be – and are – classified as the precedents of the “global city”⁹ – powerful metropolises, which already in the late 19th century created denser connections to other global cities than to their own national or imperial hinterland.¹⁰ “Imperial” and “global” are attributes that some historians use almost interchangeably; in contemporary city marketing “global” is preferred to its ‘evil twin’ “imperial”.¹¹ Historians underline how much the history of globalization, imperialism, and colonialism has been en-

Cambridge 2008, p. 250.

⁶ Lees/Lees, *Cities*; Osterhammel, *Transformation*, pp. 264-197; on classification see Talja Blokland/Alan Harding, *Urban Theory. A Critical Introduction to Power, Cities and Urbanism in the 21st Century*, London 2014, pp. 1-22.

⁷ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 295.

⁸ For instance, Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900. The Imperial Metropolis*, New Haven 1999; Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis. The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris*, Lincoln 2010; Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis. Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism*, New York 2015; Jill Steward, *The Potemkin City: Tourist Images of Late Imperial Vienna*, in: Felix Driver/Felix Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display und Identity*, Manchester 1999, pp. 78-95; David Atkinson/Denis Cosgrove/Anna Notaro, *Empire in Modern Rome: Shaping and Remembering an Imperial City, 1870*, in: Felix Driver/Felix Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display und Identity*, Manchester 1999, pp. 40-63; Amandine Lauro (ed.), *Bruxelles et le Congo, Cahiers de La Fonderie 38/2008*; Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*, Berkeley, 1996; Ulrich Van der Heyden/Joachim Zeller (eds.), *Kolonialmetropole Berlin. Eine Spurensuche*, Berlin 2002.

⁹ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City*, New York, London, Tokyo, Princeton 1991.

¹⁰ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 263.

¹¹ Sheryllynne Haggerty/Anthony Webster/Nicholas J. White, Introduction, in: *ibid.* (eds.), *The Empire in One City? Liverpool's Inconvenient Past*, Manchester/New York 2008, pp. 1-16, here pp. 3-5.

tangled by using terms such as “colonial globality”¹², “global colonialism”¹³, and “imperial global”.¹⁴ Studies on imperial and global cities share the same problem: while focusing on a rather short list of European metropolises that form the first division of global and imperial players, they leave out a great part of the urban world.

Secondly, *what is a “second city”?* The term describes the competition between a capital or “primate city”¹⁵ and its rival about the numbers of town-dwellers, and superiority in economic, political, and cultural terms. As a relational category it helps to grasp the ambiguous relationship between two leading cities within a specific territorial, mostly national, framework.¹⁶ Recently, the concept of second city has been rediscovered in the literature on the history of the second tier of global cities. In his monograph on Manchester and Philadelphia since the late 18th century, Jerome Hodos argues that second cities ought to “fill that broad space between the global city and the hopelessly marginalized city, thereby extending the reach of global city theory to new places.”¹⁷ While placing cities into a global hierarchy, this approach focuses rather on the minor league than the major league of global cities.

The term “second imperial cities”, however, was introduced incidentally. Implicitly drawing the distinction between first and second cities, Jürgen Osterhammel addresses a gap in the research on the imperial connections in the urban realm.¹⁸ Indeed, the existing scholarship tends to equate imperial cities with the capital cities of colonial powers. Nevertheless, it is worth examining in what ways the term *second imperial city* makes sense analytically.

I argue that in addition to the respective capital cities, a small number of big port cities became “anchor points of entanglements”¹⁹ in which the imprint of empire in Europe was most intense. The following sections show how these port cities became “nexus of the empire”²⁰ serving “as markets for goods, desti-

¹² Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History*, Cambridge 2012, p. 177.

¹³ John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires 1400–2000*, Cambridge 2007, p. 299.

¹⁴ Tony Ballantyne/Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global, 1870–1945*, Cambridge 2014, p. 20.

¹⁵ Mark Jefferson, *The Law of the Primate City*, in: *Geographical Review* 29/1939, pp. 226–232.

¹⁶ Maiken Umbach, *A Tale of Second Cities: Autonomy, Culture, and the Law in Hamburg and Barcelona in the Late Nineteenth Century*, in: *The American Historical Review* 110:3, 2005, pp. 659–692; Patricia Van Uelzen, *Imagine a Metropolis: Rotterdam's Creative Class, 1970–2000*, Rotterdam 2007.

¹⁷ Jerome Hodos, *Second Cities, Globalization and Local Politics in Manchester and Philadelphia*, Philadelphia 2011, p. 7.

¹⁸ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 296.

¹⁹ Heerten, *Ankerpunkte der Verflechtung*.

²⁰ Jonathan Schnee, *London's Docks in 1900: Nexus of Empire*, in: *Labour History Review*

nations for migrants, sites for industrial production and the processing of raw materials, and prime locations of political, social, and financial services.”²¹

The article deals with the position of these Western European port cities in the age of high imperialism.²² I take Marseille, Antwerp, Hamburg, and Liverpool as examples of second imperial cities.²³ Through these case studies, I sketch the development of modern European ports and the decisive role played by local elite actors, such as merchants and industrialists. Furthermore, I show some examples of the ambiguous relationship between the first and second city for imperial expansion and rule. Then, I argue that if we stay at this level of conceptualization, our analysis risks to remain only within the frame of the nation-state. It is not only the outward orientation of port cities that calls for extending the national frame that underlies the concept of second cities. Once you take into account the global dimension and the manifold entanglements of second imperial cities, the relational other to whom they might be second becomes unclear. Finally, I argue for a global urban history that is less about ranking cities on a global scale than about networks and intersections that bind together (port) cities in a complex, entangled, yet asymmetric, imperial world.

2. Becoming Second Imperial Cities: The Cases of Antwerp, Hamburg, Liverpool, and Marseille

Of course, Antwerp, Hamburg, Liverpool, and Marseille were not identical. Yet, they shared some important structural characteristics that made them highly entangled with processes of imperial expansion and rule. Some institutional similarities were also due to rivalries over imperial dominance and ongoing trans-imperial comparisons of political and economic actors regarding the organization and maintaining of colonial rule. The making of a second imperial

59:3, 1994, pp. 20-33.

²¹ Lees/Lees, *Cities*, p. 254.

²² Lasse Heerten/Daniel Tödt, *Some Reflections on Imperial Port Cities in the Age of Steam*, in: *Global Urban History*, 29.10.2016, <https://globalurbanhistory.com/2016/10/29/some-reflections-on-imperial-port-cities-in-the-age-of-steam/> (25.9.2019). The importance of imperial expansion and colonial rule are two factors that are often missing in the history of port cities, see for instance Robert Lee, *The Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics of Port Cities: A Typology for Comparative Analysis?*, in: *Urban History*, 25:2, 1998, pp. 147-172.

²³ The list could be expanded. Rotterdam and Sevilla qualify as second cities of Dutch and Spanish Imperialism. In her new book project, Alison Frank Johnson underlines the decisive role of Trieste for Austria's attempt to become a maritime empire in the 19th century. Osaka is also a candidate for the second city of the Japanese Empire, see Catherine L. Phipps, *Empires on the Waterfront, Japan's Ports and Power, 1858-1899*, Harvard 2015.

city was primarily based on (I) a modern port infrastructure and maritime connections linking the metropole with the shores of the empire, (II) a port economy and local industry shaped by colonial trade, (III) the local development of institutions and cultural events propagating imperialism and the port cities' important role, and (IV) the representation and position of these cities as urban-maritime borderlands between empire and nation accentuating the unruliness of port cities.²⁴

(I) A Modern Port Infrastructure and Maritime Connections Linking the Metropole with the Shores of the Empire

With the exception of London²⁵, most capital cities of the main European late-imperial powers lacked a sea-port. Yet, maritime connections were crucial for making empires – and so were ports. The imperial need for modern ports and intersecting transport infrastructure made some port cities important. None of the “second imperial cities” hosted an important naval base for military purposes. While imperial conquest was assured by the politics of the gun-boat, naval vessels were located in smaller towns, such as Toulon, Portsmouth, Wilhelmshaven, and Ostende. However, in the port cities under discussion we clearly see how “the expansion of maritime business had gone hand in hand with the expansion of empire”, as Michael Miller put it.²⁶

For instance, the port city of Marseille was a key factor for France's second colonial empire.²⁷ After the loss of the Caribbean and American colonies and

²⁴ I freely adapt the recent definitions of second cities by Jerome Hodos. (I) relates to the attempts to “design global transportation infrastructure projects as a way of preserving or enhancing their access to and participation in global flows” (Jerome Hodos, *Globalization and the Concept of the Second City*, in: *City & Community* 5:6, 2007, p. 326); (II) is parallel to not having international-financial sectors but manufacturing industries (Hodos, *Second Cities*, p. 14); (III) hints to the “municipal foreign policy” and that the “second-city identity is forged and expressed through cultural plans that attempt to project the city upon the world stage” (Hodos, *Globalization*, p. 328), and takes into account the sites of colonial knowledge production as part of the global “professional and instrumental” expert culture (Hodos, *Second Cities*, p. 15; Hodos, *Globalization*, p. 325).

²⁵ Amsterdam and Lisbon are two additional examples of capital cities that were also the major imperial port.

²⁶ Michael B. Miller, *Europe and the Maritime World. A Twentieth-Century History*, Cambridge 2012, p. 14.

²⁷ Cf. Pascal Blanchard/Gilles Boëtsch (eds.), *Marseille Porte Sud, Un siècle d'histoire coloniale et d'immigration*, Paris 2005. For recent publications on this topic focusing the entanglements of Southern France and Northern Algeria see Manuel Borutta, *Mediterrane Verflechtungen. Frankreich und Algerien zwischen Kolonisierung und Dekolonisierung*, Konstanz 2019; on the Colonial exhibition: Marlène De Saussure, *Claiming Marseille*

the abolition of the slave trade in France at the beginning of the 19th century, the French imperial gaze shifted from the Atlantic Ocean and its port cities such as Nantes to the Mediterranean Sea. Merchants in Marseille organized within the chamber of commerce (CCM) were the first who called for the colonization of Northern African shores.²⁸ While in the first decade after the conquest of Algiers in 1830 the French state was uncertain about how to deal with its new possessions, the CCM in Marseille launched a nationwide campaign for the incorporation of the Algerian shore, arguing that this would foster the wealth of the Midi and the nation.²⁹ The campaign succeeded and in 1848, the Second Republic declared Algiers, Constantine, and Oran as integral part of the Hexagon.

In the 1860s, a modern port was erected a mile away from the historical port in Marseille and successively expanded due to the tightened colonial rule over Algeria. In terms of size and technology, it surpassed even its role model, the India Docks of London. Marseille soon turned into the most important French port, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the consolidation of the Second French Empire in Asian and African territories in the 1880s.³⁰ The new strategic position of Marseille and the absence of local financial institutions attracted entrepreneurs from Paris who invested in the port and transportation infrastructure, in railway connections from the hinterland to the quays, steamship companies, and urban constructions.³¹ The Compagnie des messageries maritimes became the biggest French shipping line for transporting passengers, goods, and mails throughout the French empire and beyond. Its foundation in 1851 was instigated by a businessman from Marseille operating in the Eastern Mediterranean. The state-owned company's headquarter was located in Paris, and the ships were built in La Ciotat nearby Marseille.³² Marseille's status as "second city" came at the prize of being integrated in the national economy and subordinated to the French state centralized in Paris.³³ The so called *porte de l'orient* was not only the gateway to the French colonial empire, but became the main stopover for passengers travelling from Europe to

Metropolis. A Diachronic Study on Urban Representation and Metropolitanism in (Post)Colonial Marseille, 1906 and 2013, Berlin 2018.

²⁸ Ian Coller, Arab France. Islam and the Making of Modern Europe, 1798–1831, Berkeley 2010.

²⁹ Manuel Borutta, Frankreichs Süden. Der Midi und Algerien, 1830–1962, in: Francia 41/2014, pp. 201–224, here p. 211.

³⁰ René Borruy, Le port moderne de Marseille, du dock au conteneur (1844–1974), Marseille 1994.

³¹ Borutta, Frankreichs Süden, p. 212.

³² Paul Bois, Le grand siècle des Messageries maritimes, Marseille 1992.

³³ Borutta, Frankreichs Süden, p. 212.

Asia – the shortest way from London to India was to take a ferry to France and then a train to Marseille to board a steamship in its modern port.³⁴

Similar to Marseille, Antwerp can also be described as a second imperial city due to its strategic role for Belgian imperialism.³⁵ In the 16th century, Antwerp had temporally become the centre of international trade dominating the import of sugar from Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas.³⁶ After the Golden Age, in the 19th century the city finally transitioned from a pre-industrial production economy to an international port economy.³⁷ Since the foundation of Belgium in 1830, Antwerp has been central for the national economy and benefitted from large state funding.³⁸ The city became the link between the highly populated industrial regions of Western Europe, first and foremost the German Ruhr region, and the global market by means of a dense railway-port network. Around 1900, its port competed with nearby Rotterdam, London, Liverpool, New York, and Hamburg.³⁹

The growing importance of Antwerp was, in part, due to King Leopold II's imperial aspirations. While considerable trading relations from Antwerp to regions in Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Australia had already existed, a new connection to Central Africa emerged in the 1880s, after Leopold II succeeded to claim private ownership over the Congo Free State.⁴⁰ Compared to a general disaffection within Belgian society towards Leopold's personal overseas possessions⁴¹, businessmen from Antwerp with close connections to the palace in Brussels were the first to invest in Congo. Likewise, the first missionaries originated from the port city and one of their first stations was named New-Antwerp.⁴²

³⁴ Lees/Lees, *Cities*, p. 265.

³⁵ Until 1960, the Belgian Empire included only the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi; nevertheless, it comprised a territory as big as Europe from the coasts of Portugal to the Volga River.

³⁶ Clemens Zimmermann, *Antwerpen 1560–1600: Abbruch oder Verengung eines Entwicklungspfadcs?*, in: *MSG 2/2018*, pp. 31–43.

³⁷ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 275.

³⁸ Miller, *Europe*, pp. 46–49.

³⁹ Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980*, Cambridge 2012, p. 145; Paul T. van de Laar, *Port Traffic in Rotterdam: the Competitive Edge of a Rhine-port (1880–1914)*, in: Greta Devos/Erik Buys/Reginald Loyaen (eds.), *Struggling for Leadership: Antwerp-Rotterdam. Port Competition between 1870–2000*, Heidelberg 2002, pp. 63–86.

⁴⁰ Johan Lagae/Els De Palmaenaer/Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu, *Colonial Port*, in: *Museum aan de Stroom (MAS)* (ed.), *Antwerp. World Port. On trading and Shipping*, Antwerp 2012, pp. 101–126, here p. 104.

⁴¹ Vanthemsche, *Belgium*, p. 78; Matthew G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo. A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism*, London 2011.

⁴² Zana Aziza Etambala, *Antwerp and the Colony, from 1885 until ca. 1920*, in: Mandy

Despite his promises of free trade, Leopold II tended to prefer Belgian enterprises for the exploitation of Congo's resources. However, the maritime connections between Belgium and Congo were first assured by foreign companies that dominated world shipping, including lines calling on the West African coast. In 1895, two transport companies were registered in Antwerp: The Compagnie Belge Maritime du Congo (CBMC) who was part of the British Elder Dempster Group from Liverpool, and the Société Maritime du Congo (SMC), a subsidiary of the Woermann-Linie from Hamburg.⁴³ Soon after the international campaign against the atrocities in King Leopold II Free State that resulted in the takeover of the territory by the Belgian state in 1908, shipping became a national affair. In 1911, the British holdings of CBMC were bought by the Banque d'outre-mer, a Belgian finance company who sought to reduce British economic influence in the Congo.⁴⁴ Finally, different shipping enterprises were incorporated into the Compagnie Maritime Belge (CMB).⁴⁵ The maritime transport infrastructure of CMB became nationalized: ships were built and repaired in Belgium⁴⁶, and coal from the Wallonia mines made the steamships independent from British hegemony in the coal trade.⁴⁷ Contracts with the colonial ministry turned the maritime transport between Congo and Belgium into a monopoly.

The port city of Hamburg was the "imperial gateway"⁴⁸ for Germany. Like many other second imperial cities, Hamburg too entertained an ambiguous relationship with its nation-state. Although Hamburg joined the newly created German Reich in 1871, powerful local merchants organized in the city council and chamber of commerce only agreed to join of the customs union in 1881.⁴⁹ In return, the German Reich co-financed the construction of a new warehouse district and a free port well integrated by railway with Berlin and the outskirts of the Reich.⁵⁰ Hamburg developed into a global hub for oversea-trade with

Nauwelaerts (ed.), *De panoramische droom, Antwerpen en de wereldtentoonstellingen 1885/1894/1930*, Antwerpen 1993b, pp. 185-194, here pp. 185-186.

⁴³ SMC ceased its activities in 1904. Cf. Greta Devos/Guy Elewaut, *CMB 100, a Century of Commitment to Shipping*, Tielt 1995, pp. 22-29.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ Guy Vanthemsche, *La Belgique et le Congo*, Brussel 2007, p. 236.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ On Barak, *Outsourcing: Energy and Empire in the Age of Coal, 1820-1911*, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47:3, 2015, pp. 425-445.

⁴⁸ Lasse Heerten is investigating this role within a DFG-funded research project "Imperial Gateway. Hamburg, Imperial Germany and the Making of a Global Port", see <http://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/278804377?language=en> (21.9.2019).

⁴⁹ Lasse Heerten, *Die Vernetzung der Welt. Maritime Globalisierungen*, in: *Deutsches Historisches Museum* (ed.), *Europa und das Meer*, München 2018, pp. 89-99, here pp. 93-94; Lees/Lees, *Cities*, pp. 254-255.

⁵⁰ Helen Meller, *Hamburg and Marseilles: Cultural Institutions, Civic Exhibitions and City*

goods such as coffee, sugar, cotton, wheat, and attracted respective industries processing the raw material. The city hosted the biggest shipping company of the world, the widely ramified HAPAG, mainly serving lines to Northern America. Many other companies connected the port of Hamburg with other continents. The city was the entry-point for goods from the German colonies in Africa, Asia, and Oceania.⁵¹ The Woermann-Linie, whose founder Adolph Woermann (1847–1911) was among the Hamburg merchants lobbying for colonial possessions, dominated shipping to Africa. The steamships calling in the ports of German colonies transported goods and passengers including the troops fighting war in German South-West-Africa.⁵² Demographically, the international trade turned Hamburg into a “shock city”:⁵³ with its over one million inhabitants in 1912, it was larger than some European capital cities, such as Rome.⁵⁴

Liverpool is considered to be the “second city of the British Empire”.⁵⁵ It had dominated the British slave trade, but the abolition in 1807 forced local businessmen to focus on “legitimate trade”.⁵⁶ The city expanded in the 1830s parallel to the rise of neighbouring Manchester as the world’s biggest industrial city.⁵⁷ Railway and waterway connections to the global centres of the industrial revolution were established, and new docks were successively constructed between 1830 and 1888.⁵⁸ The port had trade links to nearly every shore of the world, including India and South America, prompting contemporaries around 1900 to say that “all seas lead to Liverpool”.⁵⁹ Merchants and businessmen who

Development 1890–1930, in: Peter Borsay (ed.), *New Directions in Urban History. Aspects of European Art, Health, Tourism and Leisure since the Enlightenment*, Münster 2000, pp. 147–170, here p. 151.

⁵¹ For the colonial history of Hamburg see Helmut Washausen, *Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Reiches: 1880–1890*, Hamburg 1968. This topic is currently investigated at the Forschungsstelle “Hamburgs (post-)koloniales Erbe / Hamburg und die frühe Globalisierung” at the Universität Hamburg.

⁵² Kim Sebastian Todzi, *Kolonialismus und Imperialismus 1864–1919*, <https://geschichtsbuch.hamburg.de/epochen/kolonialismus/>.

⁵³ Paul T. van de Laar, *Shock Cities: Liverpool, Marseille en Rotterdam en de beeldvorming van de negentiende-eeuwse havenstad*, in: *Holland: regionaal-historisch tijdschrift* 45/2013–2014, pp. 156–170.

⁵⁴ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 278.

⁵⁵ Anthony D. King, *Writing the Global City: Globalisation, Postcolonialism and the Urban*, London/New York 2016, pp. 188–190.

⁵⁶ David Richardson/Suzanne Schwarz/Anthony Tibbles (eds.), *Liverpool and the Transatlantic Slavery*, Liverpool 2008.

⁵⁷ Peter Hall, *The First Industrial City: Manchester 1760–1830*, London 1998.

⁵⁸ Eric Taplin, *The History of Dock Labour: Liverpool, circa 1850–1914*, in: Sam Davies et al. (eds.), *Dock Workers. International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790–1970*, Burlington 2000, pp. 442–470, here p. 443.

⁵⁹ Tristan Hunt, *Ten Cities that Made an Empire*, London 2015, p. 389.

promoted the “free trade” in Britain’s “informal empire” finally applauded direct colonial rule following the partition of Africa in the late 19th century. Not only did the city’s shipping companies such as the Elder Dempster continue to dominate the maritime connection to Africa, but their chairman and directors even controlled the chambers of commerce in the colonies: “Liverpool had long been the real metropolis of the British West African coast. Now its commercial reach extended to the fringes of the Sahara”⁶⁰, as John Darwin had put it. Furthermore, Liverpool was the biggest British port for the mass migration to the USA, Australia, Canada, and other British oversea territories, competing with Hamburg, Bremen, Antwerp, and Rotterdam.⁶¹

Thus, the port infrastructure of the “second imperial cities” and the shipping lines did indeed follow and foster trade connections within the respective empire. While maritime connectivity certainly overlapped with the imperial geography, it wasn’t necessarily limited to it – especially in the case of port cities that acted as hubs of global trade.

Although to a varying extent and locally specific, the economy of these port cities was marked by empire in multiple ways. The urban economy of Marseille and Liverpool became particularly dependent on the opportunities imperial rule created. Deprived of a well-connected industrial hinterland, many factories processing material imported from the colonies were established in Marseille. Alongside sugar refining and olive oil production plants, the famous *savon de Marseille* stood out in the economic landscape, being produced in over 90 local factories. The soap consisted primarily of coconut or palm oil imported from plantations of the West African region that became the French colony Dahomey. Members of the chamber of commerce like Cyprien Fabre (1838–1896) profited not only by owning steamships that transported goods such as palm oil to Marseille, but also by owning factories which turned the palm oil into manufactured goods.⁶² The economic boom of the port city – mainly triggered by handling the trade with the French departments of Algeria – became highly dependent on the colonial markets protected by the French state.⁶³ Therefore, decolonization in the mid-20th century brought on an economic de-

⁶⁰ John Darwin, *The Empire Project. The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970*, Cambridge 2009, p. 284.

⁶¹ John Herson, *Stirring Spectacles of Cosmopolitan Animation: Liverpool as a Diasporic City, 1825–1913*, in: Haggerty/Webster/White, *The Empire*, pp. 55–78; Laar, *Shock Cities*, p. 3.

⁶² Xavier Daumalin, *Marseille et l'Ouest africain. L'outre-mer des industriels (1841–1956)*, Marseille 1998.

⁶³ Borutta, *Frankreichs Süden*, pp. 211–212.

cline affecting shipping companies, factories, and multiple maritime businesses in Marseille.⁶⁴

Liverpool represents a partly similar case. Throughout the 19th century, the city acquired a central role in the “colonial economic system”.⁶⁵ Liverpool dominated the sugar trade with the West Indies, the cotton trade with the American South, and the palm oil trade with West Africa. According to Miller, it developed into “Britain’s top grain port and the world’s second largest milling center”.⁶⁶ However, few manufacturing enterprises emerged around the dockyards where raw materials arrived for transshipment⁶⁷ – the Lever Brothers’ soap made out of palm oil from West Africa and Belgian Congo stands out in particular. When the newly opened Manchester-Ship-Canal cut off Liverpool from the highly lucrative transshipment business with the industrial metropolis, it was the booming colonial trade that absorbed the losses. The urban economy was closely interwoven with the bustling port and centred around trade and exchange. Therefore, the occupational structure of the city developed around port activities. With decolonization, Liverpool saw the same fate as Marseille: both port cities rose and fell with the colonial trade.

Although Hamburg and Antwerp profited from being nodes of imperial connectivity, their respective business networks and trade relations exceeded the formal empire. They became ports of world-rank and global trade centres serving as major points for transshipment rather than supplying local manufacturing sites.⁶⁸ Both cities became less dependent on imperial trade. For example, although Hamburg was the leading trading centre for coffee in Europe, only marginal amounts of the coffee originated in German colonies.⁶⁹

However, Antwerp did flourish around 1900 with the colonial trade in rubber, ivory, palm products, and later diamonds. While in 1888 only six tons of ivory arrived at the port of Antwerp, by 1901 that number had grown to 5,800 tons, establishing the city as the world’s largest ivory market.⁷⁰ Antwerp was also a global hub for the cobalt trade, 90 per cent of which came from the Congo. Already in 1895 Leopold II’s “private colony” was facing bankruptcy. The commercial elite of the thriving port city openly supported a possible take-over by the Belgian state. Yet, with the high demand of rubber for “auto-

⁶⁴ Miller, *Europe*, pp. 58–59.

⁶⁵ King, *Writing*, p. 189.

⁶⁶ Miller, *Europe*, p. 268.

⁶⁷ Taplin, *The History*, p. 452.

⁶⁸ Miller, *Europe*, p. 16.

⁶⁹ Laura Rieschbieter, *Mikro-Ökonomie der Globalisierung. Kaffee, Kaufleute und Konsumenten im Kaiserreich 1870–1914*, Köln/Wien/Weimar 2011, p. 338.

⁷⁰ Lagae/Palmenaer/Sabakinu, *Colonial*, p. 106.

mobile tyres, insulating material and pencil rubbers”⁷¹ the Free State as well as the many enterprises in Antwerp boomed. Within eleven years, the annual export of rubber skyrocketed from 4.7 tons to 5,689 tons.⁷² One of the main producers of rubber was the Antwerp based Société Anversoise du Commerce au Congo – and its shipping monopoly on the Congo-Antwerp line made Elder Dempster in Liverpool another huge profiteer. While rubber meant prosperity in Antwerp, it meant atrocities in its harvesting areas. In light of the international humanitarian campaign against Leopold’s brutal rule, the Belgian state took control over Congo in 1908 – not least because of the growing private investment by Belgian enterprises in the Free State. Antwerp continued to defend its position as the second imperial city. Local businessmen entered the national scene by directing colonial enterprises seated in Brussels. For instance, more than a third of all members on the board of directors of the Compagnie Generale du Congo in 1920s were merchants from Antwerp.⁷³ All in all, Antwerp took the role of “a global transit hub for Congolese goods” with high profits for local traders. Yet, compared to the overall traffic of the port, the share of Congolese goods stayed small. It did not exceed 1.79 per cent of the tonnage of arriving and departing ships for the period from 1895 to 1939.⁷⁴

After the independence of Belgian Congo in 1960, Antwerp still ranked among the world’s leading ports. Similar to Hamburg, this was due to a diversified port economy that included transshipment and a dominant position in global trade supported by close connections to a heavily industrialized and populous hinterland. Yet, the turning point in the port city’s fate in the 1950s was not triggered by a political revolution but a technological one: the decisive reason why Hamburg and Antwerp remained major world ports was their successful shift to containerization.

(III) Empire on the European Waterfront: Colonial Institutions and Cultural Events Propagating Overseas Possessions and the Port Cities’ Strategic Position

In these port cities, local merchants and industrialists promoted and supported imperialism by means of cultural events and institutions producing knowledge that was necessary for colonial rule. The second imperial cities turned into social spaces in which the “empire at home”⁷⁵ became part of urban experience.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 107.

⁷² Julia Seibert, *In die globale Wirtschaft gezwungen. Arbeit und kolonialer Kapitalismus im Kongo (1885–1960)*, Frankfurt 2016, p. 39.

⁷³ Etambala, Antwerp, p. 190.

⁷⁴ Vanthemsche, Belgium, p. 187.

⁷⁵ Catherine Hall/Sonya O. Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire. Metropolitan Culture and*

Since the 1880s, the chamber of commerce of Marseille (CCM) had been fostering cultural and educational initiatives in order to promote the city as the “capital of the empire”. A key figure in the CCM was Jules Charles-Roux (1841–1918), a politician, businessman, and influential lobbyist in Paris whose career is emblematic for the second imperial city: born into a family of soap industrialists in Marseille, he became a member of the CCM, served on the boards of directors for French shipping companies such as the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and the *Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes*, and the Suez Canal company. The most prominent cultural event supported by the CCM was the Marseille colonial exhibition in 1906 (and 1922) that attracted over 1.8 million mostly regional visitors to a showcase of the colonies in miniature. The exhibition promoted imperial consciousness, economic investment, and the leading role of Marseille as the gateway to the French empire.⁷⁶ It was more acclaimed internationally than it was nationally – the French president only attended it at the last minute after its success had become evident. Its outward orientation was intentional and mirrored in the fact that most of the funding came from the colonial administrations with only the smallest part from the French government.⁷⁷ The colonial exhibition represented the French empire and Marseille as its capital.⁷⁸ This “municipal foreign policy”⁷⁹ bore fruits: the event gave a boost to the local economy.

In Antwerp, local merchants and industrialists in the chamber of commerce celebrated the creation of the Congo Free State at the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885.⁸⁰ Antwerp had already become Belgium’s centre for supporters of explorations that hailed imperial aspirations of Leopold II. Here, the very first international geographical congress was hosted in 1871 and triggered the blossoming of geographical societies worldwide. In 1885, the local Royal Geographical Society organized a pavilion dedicated to the Congo at the World Exhibition in Antwerp. It showcased not only the many natural resources in Central Africa and the region’s potential as a market, but also the “tribes” of the Congo. Eleven Congolese were exhibited as “savages” in order to propagate the “civilizing mission” and white supremacy.⁸¹ Only nine years later, another World Exhibition took place in Antwerp attracting 3 million visitors. It in-

the Imperial World, Cambridge 2011.

⁷⁶ Yael S. Fletcher, ‘Capital of the Colonies’: Real and Imagined Boundaries between Metropole and Empire in 1920s Marseilles, in: Felix Driver/Felix Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities. Landscape, Display und Identity*, Manchester 1999a, pp. 136–154.

⁷⁷ Yael S. Fletcher, *City, Nation, and Empire in Marseilles, 1919–1939*, Atlanta 1999b, p. 127.

⁷⁸ De Saussure, *Claiming*.

⁷⁹ Hodos, *Second Cities*, pp. 123–124.

⁸⁰ Vanthemsche, *Belgium*, p. 187.

⁸¹ For this section see Etambala, Antwerp.

cluded another Congo section guarded by African soldiers that preached the Belgian king's colonial rule and his alleged humanitarian struggle against slavery. A village with 144 persons from different regions of the Congo was set up next to animal.⁸² Brussels hosted similar fairs with colonial exhibitions and the Royal Congo museum was located in nearby Tervuren. However, Antwerp stood out in organizing several events promoting colonial trade and its vitality for the port city. For more than a decade, an annual fair presented objects related to various social, economic, and religious aspects of the Belgian empire.⁸³ Commercial parades in Antwerp included colonial floats: a miniature of the "Congo boats" was part of the procession of *naties* that handled Congolese products on the docks.⁸⁴ The arrival of the real "Congo boats" in the port of Antwerp represented a regular and even greater attraction for the town-dwellers and publicly displayed the Belgian presence in Central Africa.

In Hamburg, Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913), the son of a local fisherman, became Europe's major trader with animals and started professionalizing the so called "human zoos" in the 1870s. Even though his so-called "anthropological-zoological exhibitions" included only a small number of persons from the German colonies, it nevertheless mirrored colonial ideology by showcasing cultural differences and the "primitiveness" of colonized societies. While Hagenbeck had sent most of the exhibited persons on tour in the German Reich and other European cities, the permanent "human zoos" made the opening of his *Tierpark* in the outskirts of Hamburg a major attraction.⁸⁵

In Liverpool, similar events emphasized the city's imperial connections. To name but a few: The "Shipperies Exhibition" and the International Colonial Products and Tropical Products Exhibition in 1904 and 1907.⁸⁶

In a similar vein, museums were another cultural institution which expanded along with colonial imperialism in the port cities. In Marseille, a Colonial Museum and a Colonial Botanic Garden were inaugurated in 1893 by Edouard Marie Heckel (1843–1916), who later also initiated the Colonial Exhibitions. The collection of the Völkerkunde Museum in Hamburg exhibited transshipped objects from colonial territories. The Liverpool museum likewise concentrated on displaying colonial objects and art, including the famous Bronze sculptures

⁸² Stanard, Selling, pp. 36–38.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 83.

⁸⁴ Devos/Elwaut, CMB 100, p. 91.

⁸⁵ Hilke Thode-Arora, Hagenbecks Europatourneen und die Entwicklung der Völkerschauen, in: Sandrine Lemaire et al. (eds.), *MenschenZoos. Schaufenster der Unmenschlichkeit*, Hamburg 2012, pp. 160–171; Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts. The Birth of the Modern Zoo*, Baltimore 2002.

⁸⁶ Murray Steele, *Transmitting Ideas of Empire: Representations and Celebrations in Liverpool, 1886–1953*, in: Haggerty/Webster/White, *The Empire*, pp. 123–142.

from Benin looted by British troops in the 1890s. Merchants and companies involved in imperial trade highly contributed to the so called “African collections” whose object biography reflects the ports’ function as nodal points in the maritime imperial network. The major part of the collection was ‘donated’ by Arnold Ridyard (1853–1924), a chief engineer of the Elder Dempster shipping line. From the 1880s to 1916, Ridyard used his regular stop-over along the West African coast to ‘acquire’ 2,481 objects for the Liverpool museum that were transported free of charge.⁸⁷

Second imperial cities became not only prime sites of promoting colonial ideology to the wider public. They also hosted some of their respective countries’ leading institutions for the production and teaching of colonial knowledge. This fostered the port cities’ strategic position for imperial rule and local business interests.

Tropical medicine was a key factor for colonial conquest enabling European troops, administrators, and settlers to occupy new territories. It was also a tool for sustaining and protecting the trade flow, maritime connections, and commercial interests. This was especially true for economic elites in port cities who profited from the growing trade with “unhealthy” shores like colonial Africa.⁸⁸

The emergence of research institutions for tropical medicine took place in a national and international space of competition and exchange. Since the 1880s, tropical diseases were studied by famous medical institutes such as the Pasteur Institute in Paris and the Koch Institute in Berlin, in close connection with the respective national government. The first nominal School of Tropical Medicine, however, was founded not in a capital city but in Liverpool in 1898 – one year earlier than its counterpart in London.⁸⁹ Initiated and financed by Alfred Lewis Jones (1845–1909), the director of the Elder Dempster Shipping Line, that also maintained the lucrative maritime connection between Antwerp and Congo Free State, the school enjoyed ongoing financial support by the British government. It offered training for naval and colonial doctors, housed the world’s leading research centre for tropical diseases and even undertook study-trips expeditions mainly to Africa.

Marseille hosted the most important school for tropical medicine in France. Since 1905, doctors in military, colonial, and naval service were trained at the

⁸⁷ Louise Tythacott, *The African Collection at Liverpool Museum*, in: *African Arts* 31:3, 1998, pp. 18–35; Zachary Kingdon/Dmitri van den Bersselaar, *Collecting Empire? African Objects, West African Trade and a Liverpool Museum*, in: Haggerty/ Webster/ White, *The Empire*, pp. 110–111.

⁸⁸ Michael A. Osborne, *The Emergence of Tropical Medicine in France*, Chicago 2014, p. 156.

⁸⁹ Deborah J. Neill, *Networks in Tropical Medicine. Internationalism, Colonialism, and the Rise of a Medical Specialty, 1890–1930*, Stanford 2014, pp. 18–20.

École d'application du service de santé des troupes coloniales. The hilly location next to the Pharo Palace offered the students a panorama of the city and the steamships at the port.⁹⁰ In Belgium, the Institute of Tropical Medicine was founded by King Leopold II in 1906, most likely for public relation in times of the international campaign against the atrocities in Congo Free State that he had governed for two decades. The institute relocated from Brussels to Antwerp in 1933 – and settled in eye-sight of Leopold-dock where the steamships to Congo were berthed.⁹¹

Antwerp became the seat of another institution of colonial education that can be found in nearly all of the port cities discussed here: Colonial Schools. Belgium was the only country where colonial education was given its own university. In 1920, the Koloniale Universiteit was founded in Antwerp by the colonial minister Louis Franck who had had a career as a liberal politician and lawyer in maritime affairs in his home port-city. The university stood under the control of the colonial ministry and trained colonial administrators for their career in Belgian Congo. Replacing the relatively smaller “Colonial School” that had operated in Brussels during the times of Congo Free State, the university’s aim to train a “moral elite” was another measure of the Belgian state to dissociate oneself from the internationally discredited rule of Leopold II.⁹²

The Colonial Institute in Marseille had been established back in 1893. Financially supported by the Ministry of Colonies and the local chamber of commerce, it comprised six chairs which taught courses on diverse themes such as products, hygiene, law, geography, and history.⁹³ Located in the same building as the Colonial Museum⁹⁴, it proved to be the first and most active colonial school in France.

In Hamburg as well as in Marseille, scientific institutions related to colonial knowledge – as well as the local museums – acted as substitutes for full universities which had not been established yet. The Hamburgische Kolonialinstitut, inaugurated in 1908, primarily provided education for civil servants for the German colonies in a broad array of subjects ranging from languages, culture and geology to law. The City of Hamburg considered the Colonial Institute as a first step towards the future foundation of a university. In search of a location for an educational institution which would foster “scientific colonialism”, the new Minister of Colonies, Bernhard Dernburg, finally chose Hamburg over Ber-

⁹⁰ Osborne, *The Emergence*, p. 186.

⁹¹ Etambala, *Antwerp*, pp. 185, 190.

⁹² For this section see Standard, *Selling*, p. 139.

⁹³ Osborne, *The Emergence*, p. 168.

⁹⁴ Sarah K. Griswold, *The Colonial Museum of Marseille: Empire and Object in France’s ‘Porte de l’Orient’*, in: *Journal of the History of Collections* 30:3, 2018, pp. 395-406.

lin – the established institutions related to international and colonial trade and the local financial support made the decisive difference. The Kolonialinstitut became a strong competitor against institutions based in the capital city.⁹⁵ In a similar way, when the Institut für Schiffs- und Tropenkrankheiten was opened in 1901, its expenses shared by the City of Hamburg and the German government, the Hanseatic port city was given preference over the famous Koch Institute in Berlin.⁹⁶

These inter-city competitions over colonial institutions illustrate a general argument about the ambiguous relation between a capital city and a second city.⁹⁷ This argument deserves further attention.

(IV) Urban-maritime Borderlands between Empire and Nation: The Unruliness of Port Cities

It is worth stressing that the category ‘Second City’ was borne out of comparison. Coined in 1890 to hail the rise of Chicago as the second biggest city in the USA, the term was popularized by A. J. Liebling’s 1952 book *Second City* which described the failure of Chicago’s quest to become the most important city in the US and worldwide. Consequently, the second city concept has been used analytically as a relational category to investigate the relationship between rivaling cities. The often long-lasting competition between cities over the status of the most populated and economically and politically important city plays out in diverse spheres, such as politics and popular culture.⁹⁸

Inter-city cooperation and rivalries were also a prominent characteristic of the later imperial expansion of Western European states, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The success and development of cities such as Marseille, Antwerp, Hamburg, and Liverpool went hand in hand with nation-state building processes that retained an often ambivalent attitude towards those cities. On the one hand, the attempt of the territorial state to create political hegemony and cultural homogeneity accentuated the unruliness of port cities, located on the national periphery. On the other hand, port cities flourished and grew together with the imperial expansion of their respective states.

⁹⁵ Jens Ruppenthal, *Kolonialismus als „Wissenschaft und Technik“*. Das Hamburgische Kolonialinstitut 1908 bis 1919, Stuttgart 2007; Emily J. Levine, *Dreamland of Humanists*. Warburg, Cassirer, Panofsky, and the Hamburg School, Chicago 2013, pp. 78–80.

⁹⁶ For this section see Neill, *Networks*, pp. 21–22.

⁹⁷ Levine, *Dreamland*, p. 80.

⁹⁸ Cf. Hodos, *Second Cities*; Daniel Winkler, *Transit Marseille. Filmgeschichte einer Mittelmeermetropole*, Bielefeld 2007, pp. 17–18; Daniel Tödt, *Vom Planeten Mars. Rap in Marseille und das Imaginäre der Stadt*, Wien 2012, pp. 13–14.

Proximity to political and financial elites was an important consideration for many societies, firms and organizations, be their aims social, financial, or otherwise, which meant that they were better located in the capital cities where they could carry out their lobby work with the most success. Politics were made at the Colonial ministry in the capital where the main pressure groups for colonization were seated: for example, the Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation in Berlin, and Leopold's Association International du Congo in Brussels. Furthermore, many enterprises related to empire and colonies moved from Liverpool to London.⁹⁹ The number and influence of colonial institutions and associations in the capital cities exceeded those in the port cities – but they came a close second.

As it has been shown, these kinds of rivalries included the competition of educational and medical institutions over state funds. Furthermore, it became clear that the port cities displayed their position as the capital of the empire by means of cultural events. Looking closer at these representations, ambiguous narratives come to light in regards to the historical and symbolical location of the port cities within the national framework.

For claiming the status of the second imperial city, local elites created narratives of “path-dependency”¹⁰⁰ and “mine[d] their own histories for inspiration”.¹⁰¹ Maiken Umbach showed how local elites in second cities invented urban traditions to emphasize the maritime legacy of their city, and interpreted these narratives as a reaction to the incorporation into the national state. In the case of Hamburg, she argued that “the city’s medieval status as a Free Hanseatic City [...] provided a useful symbolic legitimacy for [...] the creation of the Free Port District.”¹⁰² Portrayed as a predestined place for the seagoing ambitions of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Hanseatic city became part of a national myth claiming the continuity of Germany’s new maritime aspirations.¹⁰³ In the long 19th century, elites in second cities not only “learned to speak ‘national’”¹⁰⁴ in order to strengthen their position, they also learned to ‘speak imperial’. In a similar vein, elites in Marseille symbolically legitimized their locational advantages for the French maritime empire by referring to the fact that the city had been founded by Greeks in ancient times. Arguing that

⁹⁹ John M. MacKenzie, Afterword: Liverpool and Empire – the Revolving Door?, in: Haggerty/ Webster/ White, The, pp. 210-228, here p. 218.

¹⁰⁰ Jörn Eiben, Einleitung: History matters...so what? Das Pfadkonzept und die Stadtgeschichte, in: MSG 2/2018, pp. 5-15.

¹⁰¹ Hodos, Globalization, p. 329.

¹⁰² Umbach, A Tale, p. 666.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 691.

French civilization originated from a Greek settlement, they claimed a path-dependency for Marseille's duty to serve as the gateway for the French civilizing mission in the colonies.¹⁰⁵ In 1885, the city council of Antwerp referred to the port's Golden Age back in the 16th century to argue that "the capital of trade, more than any other, is called to make good use of the benefits springing from the opening of the Congo River, by means of which we are able to reach the heart of Africa."¹⁰⁶ The history of Liverpool was similarly marked by a continuity of more than 200 years of imperial trade.

The narratives and myths constituting the "urban imaginary"¹⁰⁷ of these second imperial cities potentially collided with the attempts of their respective states to spread national and patriotic narratives. The aim to make cultural and linguistic homogenous nation states was challenged by the geographically peripheral and internationally connected port societies. For example, Antwerp was considered a centre of political and cultural opposition. While the Belgian nation state was dominated by francophone elites, Antwerp represented the biggest city of the Flemish part of the country. The city turned into a hotbed of Flemish nationalism that challenged the Francophone hegemony. The local elites distinguished themselves from the Belgian national narrative and displayed pride in the city's merchant history by using the nickname "sinjoren" that stems from the Spanish rule in the 16th century.¹⁰⁸ Marseille's reputation as a "ville rebelle"¹⁰⁹ was only partly based on the soldiers from the port city arriving in Paris during the French revolution singing what is later known as "La Marseillaise". The powerful Corsican mafia in the Interwar period and a population historically based on migration – enshrined in the city's founding myth – are variants of Marseille's „mauvaise reputation“¹¹⁰ in national discourse. In Liverpool, the heterogeneous composition of the city dwellers was highlighted in contemporary city branding: "There is no city in the world, not even London itself, in which so many foreign governments find it necessary to maintain consular offices for the safeguarding of their exiled subjects", the historian Ramsay Muir from Liverpool university stressed for the city's 700th anniversary in 1907, not without a side blow against the "capital of the world".¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Winkler, *Transit*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰⁶ Etambala, *Antwerp*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁷ Rolf Lindner, *The Gestalt of the Urban Imaginary*, in: Godela Weiss-Sussex/Franco Bianchini (eds.), *Urban Mindscapes of Europe*, Amsterdam/New York 2006, pp. 35-42.

¹⁰⁸ Lode Hancké, *Political Life in Antwerp between 1863 and 1930*, in: Mandy Nauwelaerts (ed.), *De panoramische droom, Antwerpen en de wereldtentoonstellingen 1885/1894/1930, Antwerpen*, pp. 119-124, here pp. 120-121.

¹⁰⁹ Winkler, *Transit*, p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Oliver Boura, *Marseille ou la mauvaise reputation*, Paris 1998.

¹¹¹ Cited in John Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*, Liverpool 2000, p. 23.

Thus, the alterity of port cities derived from local particularities which in return reflected the historical and ongoing migration and mobility of people from different places of the maritime world. Modern port cities as economic powerhouses were “sites of national prestige”¹¹², but also served as the nation’s “exotic other”. Merchant families had long-lasting global networks and migrant workers and their diasporas potentially undermined the framework of national belonging and patriotic loyalty.

The “otherness” of Liverpool within the British nation was primarily based on the numerous Welsh and Irish immigrants who flocked into the city for work in the port. Similar to Hamburg, Antwerp, and Marseille, the dock workers in Liverpool were a contradictory influence on the city as they were both crucial for the local economy, and on the forefront of syndicalism, the socialist movement and working-class struggles. Within the temporary and diverse employment structure of port cities¹¹³, maritime work with its various local and historically shifting forms of “casual configurations”¹¹⁴ became a defining feature of urban society. Furthermore, the international maritime labour market led to the temporary presence of a fluid and mobile workforce that at times created diasporas. In Liverpool, not only transient Germans and Scandinavians settled¹¹⁵, but also sailors from the West Indies and the so called “Kru” from Sierra Leone who worked as stokers on British steamships.¹¹⁶ Along the maritime lines, regional and international migration took place. In Marseille, not only Italians who made up one-third of the population in the 1930s arrived looking for work, but also people from Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Djibouti and Madagascar, and Indochina built networks and significant communities in the Interwar years.¹¹⁷ Although the maritime workforce in Hamburg and Antwerp was dominated by regional migrants¹¹⁸, the mere presence of some Chinese in St. Pauli¹¹⁹

¹¹² Brad Beaven/Karl Bell/Robert James, Introduction, in: Brad Beaven et al. (eds.), *Port Towns and Urban Cultures. International Histories of the Waterfront, c.1700–2000*, London 2016, pp. 1–10, here p. 8.

¹¹³ Jacob M. Price, *Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Perspectives in American History* 8/1974, pp. 123–186.

¹¹⁴ Marcel van der Linden/Lex Heerma van Voss, *Dockers’ Configurations*, in: Sam Davies et al. (eds.), *Dock Workers. International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790–1970*, Burlington 2000, pp. 762–780.

¹¹⁵ Herson, *Stirring*, p. 66.

¹¹⁶ Diane Frost, *Work and Community among West African Migrant Workers since the Nineteenth Century*, Liverpool 1999.

¹¹⁷ Emile Temime, *Migrance. Histoire des migrations à Marseille*, Marseille 1999.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Heerten’s project on “Imperial Gateway. Hamburg, Imperial Germany and the Making of a Global Port”.

¹¹⁹ Lars Amenda, *Fremde, Hafen, Stadt. Chinesische Migration und ihre Wahrnehmung in Hamburg 1897–1972*, Hamburg 2006.

and the shore leave of Congolese in the city of the Scheldt River was highlighted. It is no surprise that contemporaries in Hamburg and Marseille spoke of the city as a “Kostenlose Völkerschau”.¹²⁰ Yet, the multiethnic port society was less characterized by harmonious cosmopolitanism than by differences and conflicts, the 1919 xenophobic riots against colonial workers in Liverpool being only one example.¹²¹

In short: a mix of cultural and linguistic local specificities embedded in the long port history as well as a heterogeneous and fluid population originating from different parts of the world made second imperial cities appear as liminal spaces. They were symbolic and social borderlands between “land and sea”.¹²² Situated on the edge between empire and nation, second imperial cities were of peripheral centrality.

3. On Nodes and Networkers: Thinking about Second Cities in Global Urban History

So far this article presented only second imperial cities of the Western European metropolises. I defined the second city position mainly in relation to the capital city within a national framework. To overcome the mono-relational approach towards second cities, I also took into account the simultaneous and interwoven processes of empire-building and “maritime globalization”.¹²³ The concept does grasp the ambiguous relationship between port cities and the nation’s capital in processes of imperial expansion. Yet, the 19th century was characterized by a complex web of overlapping networks with varying reach and unequally distributed power.¹²⁴ Empires created and controlled intercontinental connections¹²⁵ while enforcing the “inter-dependence of [their] parts”.¹²⁶ Thus, it is worthwhile combining the rather national and Eurocentric perspective on imperial cities with a multi-relational and global perspective that is not only vertical but horizontal as well.

It is important to stress that it wasn’t only a handful of global and imperial cities that made the world of the 19th century go round. Instead, there were

¹²⁰ Lars Amenda, *Kostenlose Völkerschau. Asiatische und afrikanische Seeleute als ‚exotische‘ Attraktionen des Hamburger Hafens 1900–1930*, in: *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 41:3, 2005, pp. 329–346.

¹²¹ Gopalan Balachandran, *Subaltern Cosmopolitanism, Racial Governance and Multiculturalism: Britain, c. 1900–1945*, in: *Social History* 39:4, 2014, pp. 528–546.

¹²² Beaven, *Introduction*, p. 4.

¹²³ Heerten, *Die Vernetzung*.

¹²⁴ Christopher Alan Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, Oxford, 2004, p. 454.

¹²⁵ Jane Burbank/Fred Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and Politics of Difference*, New Jersey 2011, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Darwin, *Empire*, p. 3.

many cities creating and controlling economic, political, social, and cultural connections all over the globe. Capital cities and big port cities ranked first in Europe's urban hierarchy until the mid-20th century when industrial cities caught up.¹²⁷ This vertical perspective on the *world of cities* is useful for addressing the hierarchies and local concentration of power and wealth in certain, mostly western European cities.

In order to include the rest of the urban world, we would certainly need to define third, fourth, fifth and so on cities, establishing a hierarchy of places with decreasing influence mirroring the uneven globalization processes in the imperial world. Taking the example of the French empire: Would Lyon, Bordeaux, or Le Havre be named the third imperial city, or would the title rather go to Algiers, Dakar, or Saigon? Apart from Liverpool, there were others that claimed to be the second city of the British "Seaborne Empire":¹²⁸ Glasgow, with its globally leading shipbuilding industry, or Dublin also fought over the title¹²⁹, as did Sydney, Toronto, and Calcutta.¹³⁰ But where should bustling cities like Batavia, Bombay, and Lagos rank? Or the important coaling stations such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore¹³¹ that quickly transcended their initial industrial role and became port cities of global rank? Once we take into account the global dimension and manifold entanglements of second imperial cities, the relational other to whom, what, or *where* they might be second, third, or fourth becomes blurry.

Furthermore, we risk neglecting conceptualizations on how second cities went global: the horizontal perspective on the global system of cities. Focusing on imperial cities in Europe we do learn a great deal on how they became nodes of an imperial and global network, and how these nodes got loosened, adjusted, and tightened due to changes in transportation, economy, and politics. But we would learn even more by paying attention to the interplay of cities within the global networks of which Europe was but a part.

We should not only compare cities of the same hierarchical position, but include the entanglements between cities that caused and created the global integration that "was carried forward, asymmetrically and unevenly, on a global scale."¹³² The rise of the cotton industry in Manchester caused the decline of

¹²⁷ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 260; Andreas Eckert, *Hafenstadt*, in: *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit* 5, Stuttgart 2007, p. 35.

¹²⁸ Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire*, Yale 2004.

¹²⁹ MacKenzie, *Afterword*; A. J. Christopher, 'The Second City of the Empire': Colonial Dublin, 1911, in: *Journal of Historical Geography* 23:2, 1997, pp. 151-163.

¹³⁰ Rimli Bhattacharya, *The Nautee in 'the Second City of the Empire'*, in: *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 40:2, 2003, pp. 191-235.

¹³¹ Heerten, *Ankerpunkte*, p. 158.

¹³² Michael Geyer/Charles Bright, *World History in a Global Age*, in: *The American Historical*

production sites in Dhaka.¹³³ Likewise, events in India and Africa affected Manchester¹³⁴, and the city was much more strongly affected by the American civil war in the 1860s than by the revolutions of 1848/49 on the European continent.¹³⁵ In order to understand Amsterdam around 1850 one needs to look at Batavia.¹³⁶ In Belgian imperial history not only cities like Brussels and Antwerp were affecting each other, but also Congolese cities like Matadi, Kinshasa, and Elisabethville.¹³⁷ A city did not need to be located in the European metropole to be more important than cities in the colonies. By strongly relying on the production of jute, local businessmen in the Scottish town of Dundee tied their city economically to Calcutta and suffered heavy losses after the imperial government rather supported the prestigious city of palaces in India.¹³⁸

Another advantage of taking a horizontal perspective on city networks is the variety of actors involved. While analyses of vertical city positions tend to favour elite actors in politics or economy, a horizontal approach allows us to discern a much more varied range of groups and individuals.¹³⁹ In addition to the often cited commercial and industrial elites, other groups served as networkers among different port cities worldwide, such as, for example, the colonial maritime workers briefly mentioned above. To what extent did these other groups contribute to translocal¹⁴⁰ exchanges of political ideas, knowledge, social practices, and cultural styles? The history of colonial seafarers and dock workers fits into the discussion of port cities as “floodgates of mobility” in which “different forms of mobility were tried to be channeled and narrowed down.”¹⁴¹ Unlike studies that focus on global players of the European elite, a

Review, 100:4, 1995, pp. 1034-1060, here p. 1049.

¹³³ Hodos, *Second Cities*, p. 185.

¹³⁴ Anthony D. King, *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World-Economy*, London/New York 1990, p. 7.

¹³⁵ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 384.

¹³⁶ Lees/Lees, *Cities*, p. 253.

¹³⁷ Johan Lagae, *Leopoldville, Bruxelles: villes miroirs?*, in: Jean-Luc Vellut (ed.), *Villes d'Afrique: explorations en histoire urbaine*, Tervuren 2007, pp. 67-100.

¹³⁸ Jim Tomlinson, *Dundee and the Empire: 'Juteopolis' 1850-1939*, Edinburgh 2014.

¹³⁹ Valeska Huber, *Channeling Mobilities. Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869-1914*, Cambridge 2013.

¹⁴⁰ The term translocality “redirects attention to the complex and contradictory process (and) avoids a simplistic and teleological account of ever-increasing ‘integration’”, see Ulrike Freitag/Achim von Oppen, *Introduction – Translocality: An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies*, in: Ulrike Freitag/Achim von Oppen (eds.), *Translocality. The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, Leiden/Boston 2010, pp. 1-24, here p. 20.

¹⁴¹ Valeska Huber, *Multiple Mobilities. Über den Umgang mit verschiedenen Mobilitätsformen um 1900*, in: *GuG* 36:2, 2010, pp. 317-341.

perspective on such subaltern actors undermines common narratives of early global cities as places of smooth borderless migration, mobility, and circulation.

4. Conclusion

The discussion about the history of global and imperial cities – whether first, second or third – engages with ongoing debates. On the one hand, by favouring the horizontal perspective which focuses on connections and worldwide networks *between and among* cities, global history risks not only pushing aside the vertical approach with its hierarchy of clear-cut nodes, but also forgetting the history *in and of* cities in favour of a history *through* cities.¹⁴² On the other hand, as urban historians are under pressure to tear down the imagined city walls that for a long time bound their research objects¹⁴³, they may run into the opposite danger of losing sight of specific places while following processes of “planetary urbanization”.¹⁴⁴ In this context, port cities – which this article has classified as second imperial cities – have recently become a fashionable lens for analysing global processes within specific local contexts.

Frankly, it took global historians a long time to explore this locality. In their ground-breaking piece on *World history in a Global Age*, Bright and Geyer already argued that “the global condition has always been articulated locally” and that “processes of globalization must come to ground in concrete social, cultural and political contexts.”¹⁴⁵ Yet, even though they have emphasized the decisive role of maritime empires and communication, trade and merchants, mobility and diasporas, port cities remained in the background. This is surprising, because port cities are precisely the places in which global integration *and* fragmentation were articulated. Here, the global went ashore and the local set sail – in uneven ways. Goods, people, and ideas were transferred and translated, by means of maritime to terrestrial transportation, from colonial to metropolitan orders, and mobility and circulation were enabled or denied.

Port cities provide a haven for global historians who try to focus as much on connections between and among cities, as on their locations. What is more,

¹⁴² Osterhammel, *Transformation*, p. 384; Heerten, *Ankerpunkte*.

¹⁴³ Nicolas Kenny/Rebecca Madgin, ‘Every Time I describe a City’: Urban History as Comparative and Transnational Practice, in: Nicolas Kenny/Rebecca Madgin (eds.), *Cities beyond Borders. Comparative and Transnational Approaches to Urban History*, London/New York 2015, pp. 3–26; Shane Ewen, *What is Urban History?*, New Jersey 2015.

¹⁴⁴ Neil Brenner/Christian Schmid, *Planetary Urbanization*, in: Matthew Gandy (ed.), *Urban Constellations*, Berlin 2012, pp. 10–13.

¹⁴⁵ Bright/Geyer, *World History*, p. 1057.

they remind urban historians that cities are not bounded entities but specific sites embedded in wider processes.¹⁴⁶ More generally, global urban history should neither be all over the place, nor nestling in one locality.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ On the difference between researching the urban and the city: Dorothee Brantz, *Assembling the Multitude: Questions about Agency in the Urban Environment*, in: *Urban History* 44:1, 2017, pp. 130-136.

¹⁴⁷ For an idea of the emerging field see the blog <https://globalurbanhistory.com>, initiated by Michael Goebel.