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# SITES OF MEMORY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN CROATIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE *SEAGULL'S WINGS* MONUMENT

Marko Mustapić and Benjamin Perasović  
Institute of Social Sciences *Ivo Pilar*

## INTRODUCTION

Political power is clearly revealed in rituals and symbols, including monuments and commemorations of historical events. Indeed, commemorative activities are extremely important for the construction and renewal of collective memory. Memory is rooted in the particular – in space, in a gesture, an image or an object – which explains the importance of sites of memory, and especially monuments. Since the fall of socialism and the beginning of the transition to democracy in Croatia, numerous socialist monuments have been damaged or torn down.

Podgora is a settlement in the Makarska Riviera, 60 km to the southeast of Split.<sup>1</sup> The Makarska Riviera is one of the focal points of the antifascist uprising in Croatia during World War II. The Yugoslav Navy was also founded along the Riviera in 1942. In 1962, in honour of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Yugoslav Navy, the monument *Seagull's Wings*, by the sculptor Rajko Radović, was erected in Podgora. The monument measures 33 m high and is located on the hill above the sea. As its name suggests, it reflects the form of a seagull with one wing held high in salute to the victory over fascism, and the other, a broken wing, representing the fallen sailors. An 800-seat amphitheatre was also built as part of the monument. The goal of this paper is to examine theoretical determinants of collective memory and reinterpretation of the meaning of the monument. It also evaluates commemorative practices surrounding

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<sup>1</sup> According to the official censuses, the population of Podgora in the past 100 years varied between 2,101 (1910) and 1,268 (2011). A great number of participants and casualties in World War II relative to the small population would later have strong impact on the collective memory and commemorative practices in the local community.