

SPATIAL RESOURCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS (CASE STUDY KVARNER)

Preliminary communication

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper studies the problems and specific issues related to tourism and coastal urbanism, namely through an analysis of the tourist's, the resident's and tourism management's evaluation of the elements of the tourist offer related to space, environment and sustainable development in the tourist region of Kvarner (Croatia).

Design - The strategic guidelines for tourism development must be based on the principles of sustainable development, that is, on a balanced relation between the economic, physical, environmental and social factors of development. This includes the preservation of urban and spatial alignment and overall development.

Methodology / Approach – Empirical research was conducted using a sophisticated questionnaire adapted to each target group (tourists, residents, tourism management), printed in Croatian, English, German and Italian. A Likert scale with both open- and closed ended questions was used, ranging from 1 (worst) to 7 (best). The latter part of the questionnaire evaluated 37 tourism offer elements. The collected questionnaires were encrypted and statistically analysed. The method of one-to-one interviewing was mostly used in gathering data, although the questionnaire was self-administered by respondents in a small number of cases.

Findings – It is indicative that tourists (5.79) have, on the average, rated the elements of the tourism offering with a higher score than residents (5.31), while the score given by tourism management is somewhere in between (5.61). This suggests that residents are more critical, but also more aware, of the need for improvement in all elements of the tourism offering. Priority is given to the natural factors (5.56). These results indicate that all target groups agree that natural factors - space, resources and the environment- must be protected.

Originality of the research – This study provides reliable and actual basic quantitative and qualitative information about the attitudes of tourists, residents and tourism management toward the tourism offer of Kvarner and its destinations.

Keywords industrial development, spatial saturation, spatial planning, environmental protection, coastal urbanism

INTRODUCTION

Human aggressiveness towards natural resources produces more and more apparent negative effects on both the environment and natural resources, increasingly threatening their sustainability and calling into question the quality of life and the survival of the human race. The preferences and relationships between humans and nature are changing, from the uncritical and evergrowing subordination and the use of nature and natural resources, to the need to invest in natural resources, their preservation and careful management (Družić, 2003). It is obvious that the ownership

of these goods takes on a whole new dimension and motivation, while the sense of personal utility and appropriation transfers to the domain of the collective quality of living conditions. The strengthening of the notion that the space is given and limited by an inability to reproduce numerous, life-relevant and space-located contents, emphasises space as limited and as a universal condition of life (Weiermair, 2011). Following the explicit processes of the localization of space, the development of science, technology, communication, and flows of goods and people in the area, delocalisation and internationalization of space become more and more prominent. The process of delocalization is accelerated by the growth of environmental problems and numerous harmful interventions in the area, all of which increasingly threaten the survival of mankind (Keller, Bieger 2010).

The frequency and number of global changes impose the need to adopt a strategy of balanced development that examines and defines the main objective to be reached in certain period of time, and that determines the measures and processes by which this goal is reached (Hasna, 2012). While the goal is unquestionable, the measures and processes can, and usually do, undergo various modifications and corrections, depending on various unanticipated events and unpredictable situations. There are great differences between the strategy and the planning of balanced development. The strategy can not be subordinate to the plan, while vice versa is possible (Kuhlman, Farrington 2010). The projections for social planning are made and implemented by state institutions which usually, and unfortunately, take into account only one dimension of their lives, whether ecological, cultural or economic. However, space contains various natural, economic, social, sociological, demographic, environmental and similar contents, which can, and must be, individually marked and distinguished. On that basis, they should be classified into specific narrower and wider areas (UNWTO, 2012). All of these spatial differences and peculiarities are not only static, but have a dynamic aspect as well, characterized by the political and economic structure, forms of ownership, methods of production and appropriation of produced and natural goods.

This, along with technological development, determines the intensity and methods of influencing space and natural resources, adapts natural resources to human needs, and determines the utility of the contents present in nature (UNWTO, 2012).

Every social community, striving for a higher quality of life, requires more elaborate mechanisms of land use and the regulation of relations in the environment. The use and protection of the environment are ensured through the implementation of spatial planning documentation which, in turn, ensures a planned management in line with the goals of social and economic development. A balanced spatial planning, based on a well-conducted analysis of existing resources, occurs as a synthesis of regional-county strategies. Physical resources, as key factors for sustainable economic growth, require careful planning and management (Blowers, 2013).

In this paper, the focus is on the economy of tourism, defined by economic relations that exist between various economic factors. Better put, all human activities take place in a specific space, so territorialization of people and activities requires observation from an economic point of view. This observation forms the basis for the regional

aspects of development and, in this respect, for the comprehension of natural, spiritual, industrial, demographic, tourist and other contents in space, with the aim of preservation and improving their economic use (Črnjar, 2011). Therefore, it is indispensable to form interdisciplinary expert teams on county, town, and municipality as tourist destination levels, with their main task of instigating the forming of larger social function of public as the indispensable corrective in developing policy implementation (Blažević, 2007).

Within the framework of the project "Tourism Regionalization within Global Processes" (2003-2007), accepted by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and entrusted to the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija, a team of researchers, together with their consultants from abroad, has set an ambitious, but realistic, research goal with both theoretical and practical significance. The goal was to get an answer to the question of successful management of the Kvarner region and its tourism destinations.

The research report includes the results of an empirical study of the Kvarner Bay tourism offer on all three levels of tourism participation, namely the tourists, the residents and the tourism management, conducted in three stages. The case study data used and processed for the purposes of this work relate to the elements that refer to space, resources and the environment.

1. INTEGRAL APPROACH TO SPATIAL PROTECTION

Spatial planning has been developing intensively. The reasons for its existence, goals, tasks, means and methods for its implementation and introduction into practice, are different in each country separately, but some of the common characteristics of spatial planning can be identified. Spatial planning regulates the different ways space is used, protected and managed (Štimac, 2010).

Spatial planning, as an interdisciplinary activity, is an institutional and technical form of managing the spatial dimension of sustainability. Based on the assessment of the development opportunities (within the frame of retaining the identity of space, and the requirements for the spatial protection and conservation of environmental quality), the purpose of a particular space is determined (surface area, the conditions for the development of activities and their geographical distribution, the conditions for the improvement and urban renewal in existing built-up areas and the conditions for the realization of the planned interventions in the area - NN 76/07, 38/09).

Almost all activities are interested in spatial problems and space arrangement, but the fact does not qualify all the specialties equally in the plan elaboration technique and the technology and therefore the relevance appears (Marinović Uzelac, 2001).

In order to achieve sustainable development, in accepting its concepts, strategies, programs, plans, regulations and implementation, the state and the local (regional) governments must promote economic and social development of the society in such a way that, while meeting the needs of today's generation, they also take into account the

equal opportunity to meet the needs of future generations, and prevent the prevalence of personal interests over and at the expense of balanced development, biodiversity, environmental protection and the needs of other users of space (Marinović, Uzelac 2001).

Spatial planning, using monitoring, analysis and evaluation of specific activities' development and space vulnerability, supports sustainable development by ensuring quality living and working environment, uniformity of standards for the arrangement of certain areas, effective energy and natural resources management, and by preservation of spatial identity and long-term spatial protection as the basis for the common welfare and a prerequisite for local competitiveness. The most recent attempt to measure destination competitiveness was undertaken by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The core element of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (TTCR) is the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). TTCI consists of three subindices: the travel and tourism (T&T) regulatory framework subindex; the T&T human, cultural and natural resources subindex and the T&T business environment and infrastructure subindex which contains spatial resources (Mazanec, Ring, 2011).

The principle of horizontal integration in spatial protection

In accepting the concepts, strategies, plans, programs, regulations, licensing and approvals, an integral approach to spatial protection must be taken into account, i.e. uniform measures in different economic areas that affect urban development, particularly in order to achieve a balanced spatial sustainability in processes which affect the transformations of settlements, the use of natural resources, environmental protection, and the development of various activities and their arrangement in space, transport and energy infrastructure (Richards, Palmer, 2010).

Spatial planning improves the efficiency of planning particular economic areas relying on the assessment of their needs and performance that, in the preparation of the solution and the implementation of developmental decisions, rather than adjusting the existing decisions, includes prior coordination with other entities and persons designated by special regulations, with the purpose of preventing or minimizing the risk of damage to the area or the specific environmental components (Redman, 2005).

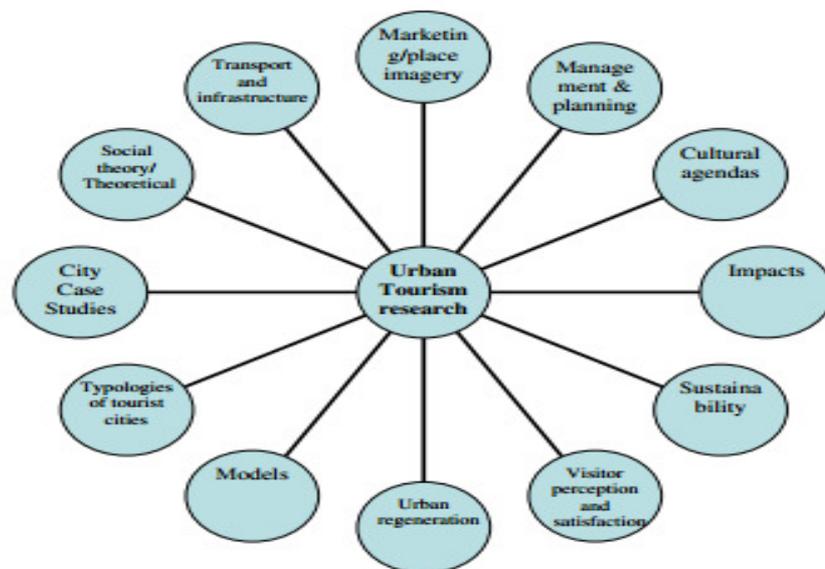
The development and adoption of spatial planning documentation must especially take into account the identity of space, the relations to harmony and landscape values, non-renewable and renewable natural resources and the cultural heritage, as well as the totality of their mutual influence and of the interrelations of the existing and the planned projects in the area (Parodi, Ayestaran, Banse 2011).

The principle of vertical integration in spatial protection and the harmonization of interests

In developing spatial planning and other developmental documentation that affect the physical development (strategies, plans, programs, etc.), in order to achieve the set goals, the state and the local (regional) self-governments, as well as the persons with public authorities, are required to cooperate in the processes of spatial planning, spatial

protection, architectural and urban renewal and other activities within the frame of meeting the spatial planning requirements (Pearce, 2001). Governments at all levels unquestionably have been central in driving, or at least supporting, the sustainable tourism development agenda (Ruhanen, 2013). The specific tasks of spatial planning depend on the vision of the future and of the development of productive forces and production relations. They do not require the creation of ideal possibilities, but rather of the realistic ones, based on the principle of opportunity - the alternative - the result. In order to make solving and overcoming the developmental conflicts and inconsistencies easier, one of the tasks is the coordination of disparities and inequalities (Jovičić, Ivanović 2006). The spatial distribution of natural and production potentials, the people and their diverse activities in a quantitatively and qualitatively determined space, points to the multidimensionality of spatial contents and processes. Thus space can be connected to an urban tourism research (see Figure 1), where space is the result of the territorialisation of natural, demographic and manufactured potentials, physically characterized by spatial separation.

Figure 1: Sub-themes within the domain of urban tourism research



Source: Ashworth & Page 2011, 1-15.

Natural resources are one of the foundations for economic development. Their geographical distribution and the number and abundance of locations determine the possibility of national development (Družić, 2003). The landscape offers many natural and cultural qualities, which historically used to serve as the base motives for tourist activities (Borsje, Tak, 2013). Natural resources are characterized by uneven spatial distribution, scantiness and imperfect mobility, suggesting the need of overcoming the constraints and creating the conditions for economic mobility. This resolves the problems of imperfect, uneven distribution and, to some extent, lessens their scantiness. All this indicates that, in practice, current spatial planning and development partially hinders economic development. The problem lies in the facts that the lower-level plans

are not created in accordance with the potential investors and that the land is not regulated. The developmental difficulties Croatia faces today are extremely large and involve a number of negative and interrelated features, such as: inadequate and insufficiently effective system of spatial planning, disordered cadastre and land registry, insufficient use of renewable energy potential, stagnation and lag in the development of the industrial sector, low population density and depopulation, the abuse of public, including maritime, goods. In addition, every Croatian region and Croatia as a whole, are most affected by the loss of an economic flywheel, a reliable initiator of permanent technological, economic, social, political and cultural revolution and systematic evolutionary change.

Although the existing Croatian system of urban planning formally aligned with EU directives, these rules alone cannot ensure the preservation of space and the increase of its value. For this to be achieved, political support of the system of spatial planning and spatial development should be ensured on all levels. Education and the development of ethical and moral values of individuals and the society create a precondition for space to become a “social value”, while its unwarranted usurpation or devastation has to become a criminal offense (Črnjar, 2011).

Today, when the world has made a very important step forward in the application of numerous techniques and instruments used in planning, especially after the The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), “sustainable development” has become “the fundamental determinant of all planning and management initiatives”, which is particularly important for tourism development. Besides basic data on macro level, segmented tourism market requires also the collection and analysis of specific data that enable the management of sustainable tourism and setting of goals and measures of tourism policies and their realisation (Blažević, Maškarin Ribarić, Smolčić Jurdana, 2013).

2. RESEARCH IN THE KVARNER REGION

2.1. Research methods and instruments

The work is based on the results of an extensive empirical research conducted in 2011 as a continuation of the earlier researches conducted in 2003 and 2006 as part of the project “An Assessment of the Tourism Offer of the Kvarner Region”, and published in the journal “Tourism and Hospitality Management” in 2004 and 2007 (Blažević, Peršić, 2004, 2007, 2012). The goal of the research is providing long-term assumptions for conducting a comparative analysis of tourism destination offer quality, using the tourism destination of Kvarner as a sample. The comparative analysis is therefore carried out in space (all destinations) and time (in comparison with previous years). The research studies the attitudes of target groups: TOURISTS, RESIDENTS AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT in a way that, on the basis of a clearly defined questionnaire, ensures achieving the set goals and the individual tasks for each target group. The study set ambitious but realistic and achievable goals, whose realization is recognised through the tasks related to the search for answers to many questions that focus on creating the conditions for the successful management of tourism destinations

in general, with the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, in the tourism market recognisable as *the Kvarner tourism destination*, taken as the model. The representativeness of the sample is confirmed by the fact that the Kvarner tourism destination realises about 20% of the total tourism turnover in Croatia. Kvarner area is one of the most developed tourism regions in Croatia, with 173 000 accommodation capacities, which represent approximately 20% of the total available beds/rooms and generates around one fifth of the total tourism turnover in Croatia (Bagarić, Žitinić, 2013).

The main goal of the research project was to obtain reliable and actual basic quantitative and qualitative information about the attitudes of tourists, residents and tourism management toward the tourism offer of Kvarner and its destinations. The results represent a quality tool for determining the characteristics of the destinations' tourism offer and monitoring the trends over a longer period of time. The basic instruments of data gathering were three different types of questionnaires (for tourists, for local residents and for tourist management), printed in Croatian, English, German and Italian. A Likert scale with both open- and closed ended questions was used, ranging from 1(worst) to 7 (best). A comparison with the studies published in 2004 was made (scale 1-5) – reduced to the ratio of relative participation. In order to make a comparative analysis of the satisfaction with various tourism offer elements on the Kvarner and its particular destinations, the first part of the questionnaire contained questions specific for each target group, while the second part (covering the satisfaction with different elements of tourism offer) was the same for all three groups. The latter part of the questionnaire evaluated 37 tourism offer elements sorted into 5 groups:

- space, resources, environment
- contents
- destination organisation
- identification, security, awareness
- residents, employees.

The method of one-to-one interviewing was mostly used in gathering data, although the questionnaire was self-administered by respondents in a small number of cases.

The field tests and the interviews were conducted by specifically instructed students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija, in the spring, summer and fall of 2011 (from May 15 to October 15), i.e. the situation was assessed in the tourism season, the pre-and post-season. The same methodological basis as in the previous two studies (in 2003 and 2006) was used. The final study included 60 interviewers, each of whom received specific instructions on the required quotas of survey respondents for each questionnaire type, destination, nationality and type of accommodation.

The collected questionnaires were encrypted and all data entered into SPSS Statistics – Version 19.0 and statistically analysed. In the following phase, the research team analysed and grouped the collected data.

The research conducted in the Kvarner region was based on the processing of 4053 correctly completed questionnaires that surveyed 1989 tourists, 1807 residents and 257 tourism managers from 36 tourism destinations in 8 sub-regions: Rijeka and its conurbation, the Opatija Riviera, Gorski kotar, the islands and the Crikvenica- Vinodol Riviera.

2.2. Tourists', residents' and tourism managers' grades for elements of the group space, resources, environment

As Table 1 clearly shows, the residents were the most critical and gave the lowest grades in all groups of tourism offer elements, especially relating to environmental preservation and sea cleanliness. As far as the negative reviews are concerned, the situation was similar with tourism managers group, which also gave low grades to environmental preservation and sea cleanliness. The tourists have valued all parameters in all three years with highest marks.

The average grade of the group of tourism offer elements related to natural resources, presented under the common denominator of "space, resources, environment" is 5.56, of which the highest grade was given to the element "landscape attractiveness" (5.87), also graded highest by the tourists (5.97). The element with the lowest grade in 2011 was the "environmental preservation" with a grade of 4.90, still higher than the results of previous studies (4.68 and 3.54). The average grade given to these elements by the tourists was slightly higher than the average in 2006 and 2011.

The comparison of the results to those of 2003 makes it clear that, as far as the environmental preservation and sea cleanliness are concerned, the alarm bells are ringing, and that spatial planning policy needs to be seriously taken into account in order to protect these elements of the tourism offer.

Table 1: **Space, resources, environment (Kvarner) – grades from tourists, residents and tourism management**

no	Elements of tourism offer	Tourists			Residents			Managers			Average		
		2003	2006	2011	2003	2006	2011	2003	2006	2011	2003	2006	2011
	The Kvarner tourism destination												
1	Climate	4.50	5.22	5.92	4.01	5.05	5.45	4.20	5.44	5.90	4.24	5.25	5.76
19	Landscape attractiveness	4.45	5.78	5.97	4.27	5.27	5.74	4.49	6.40	5.90	4.40	5.61	5.87
20	Environmental preservation	4.05	5.28	5.59	3.54	4.68	4.90	3.63	4.94	5.56	3.74	4.98	5.35
21	Sea cleanliness	4.32	5.61	5.43	3.46	4.84	5.13	3.50	5.34	5.08	3.76	5.28	5.21
	First group average	4.33	5.47	5.79	3.82	4.96	5.31	3.96	5.53	5.61	4.04	5.32	5.56

Source: author's research results

3. THE RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The strategic guidelines for the development of the The Kvarner tourism destination must be based on the principles of sustainable development, that is, on a balanced relation between the economic, environmental and social factors of development (Bac, 2013). This includes the preservation of historical and cultural heritage, urban and spatial alignment and overall development.

Natural resources are in many cases the greatest attractiveness of the tourism destinations. Great interest of the contemporary tourists for areas of natural beauty and/or uniqueness implicate the obligation for tourism managers to use all available methods and instrument in process of minimizing negative impacts that tourism has on the environment (Smolčić Jurdana, 2009). Since the tourists highlighted the importance of natural resources as a significant determinant of tourism development, the survey set to evaluate the residents' attitudes toward this issue, and included questions regarding:

- tourism endangered by industrial development;
- tourism endangered by uncontrolled construction of apartments
- tourism endangered by excessing carrying capacity.

The aim was to determine whether and to what extent is the improvement and protection of the environment taken into account, including spatial preservation that affects the landscape attractiveness. The work evaluates the attitudes of the population toward the obviously present negative trends of pollution, and the level of environmental impact of specific developmental projects and other industries, as well as the impacts on tourism itself (e.g. apartmanisation and the concreting of the coast).

Preservation and care for cultural and natural heritage could consequently be obtained by new acts on spatial arrangements aiming at solving the problem of illicit building, in accordance with the proclaimed postures and principles of trade, with the leveling of spatial living conditions of inhabitants (Krstinić Nižić, Ivanović, Drpić, 2009).

The work further analyses the tendency of the residents to become actively involved in the protection of natural resources, based on the principles of sustainable development.

3.1. Tourism endangered by industrial development

The questionnaire was to determine how aware are the residents of some smaller tourism destinations, sub-regions and the Kvarner as a whole of the vulnerability and the endangerment of tourism by industrial development, and whether they considered the symbiosis of tourism and other industries in the strategic development useful.

Table 2: Tourism endangered by industrial development (%)

Sub-regions and smaller tourism destinations of the Kvarner region		YES	PARTLY	NO
The OPATIJA RIVIERA	Ičići	4	8	2
	Lovran	7	21	19
	Matulji	8	2	2
	Mošć. Draga	5	5	5
	Opatija	31	75	34
	24 %	55	111	62
RIJEKA AND CONURBATION	Bakar	81	20	6
	Čavle	20	6	4
	Jelenje	2	3	5
	Kastav	19	37	33
	Klana	0	6	22
	Kostrena	24	11	3
	Kraljevica	35	14	6
	Rijeka	65	62	33
	Viškovo	4	38	47
	41 %	250	197	159
The CRIKVENICA-VINODOL RIVIERA (CVR)	Crikvenica	26	33	32
	Dramalj	1	3	3
	Jadranovo	0	4	3
	Novi Vinodolski	23	57	13
	Selce	0	2	3
	Vinodol. općina	8	4	4
	35 %	58	103	58
GORSKI KOTAR	Brod Moravice	2	5	6
	Čabar	0	2	8
	Delnice	0	5	6
	Fužine	4	6	5
	Lokve	1	9	5
	Mrkopalj	1	4	9
	Ravna Gora	2	14	31
	Skrad	3	9	38
	Vrbovsko	6	15	23
	8 %	17	64	131
Island CRES	Cres 12 %	6	19	24
Island KRK	Baška	26	2	2
	Dobrinj	4	8	18
	City of Krk	15	19	20
	Malinska-Dubašnica	16	32	19
	Njivice	4	10	5
	Omišalj	3	8	6
	Punat	25	5	4
	Vrbnik	0	10	20
39 %	99	113	118	
Island LOŠINJ	Mali Lošinj 15 %	16	35	55

Sub-regios and smaller tourism destinations of the Kvarner region		YES	PARTLY	NO
Island RAB	City of Rab	8	24	36
	Lopar County	5	14	11
	13 %	13	38	47
KVARNER - TOTAL	Absolutely	511	666	630
	Relatively	28 %	37 %	35 %

Source: author's research results

Although the research results indicate that 28% of the surveyed residents believe that the development of tourism is threatened by industrial development, there are large variations between the sub-regions and the smaller tourism destinations, depending on the actual locations and types of potential hazards. Thus, the threat of industrial development is felt the strongest among the population of Rijeka and its conurbation (41%), the island of Krk (39%) and the Crikvenica- Vinodol Riviera (35%). In contrast, industrial development is perceived as a small threat to tourism by the population of Gorski Kotar (8%) and part of the islands (12% Cres, Rab 13% and Lošinj 15%), which would prefer more economic activities in order to prevent the depopulation in local areas.

3.2. Tourism endangered by excessive construction of tourist accommodation

One of the key issues of sustainable tourism development is the spatial saturation, so far realised through the construction of accommodation. The research was designed to evaluate whether the adoption of regional plans reduced the impact of uncontrolled development and whether the threat of this kind is still notably present in the tourism region of Kvarner, its sub-regions and smaller tourism destinations.

Table 3: **Tourism endangered by excessive construction of tourist accommodation (%)**

Sub-regios and smaller tourism destinations of the Kvarner region		YES	PARTLY	NO
The OPATIJA RIVIERA	Ičići	5	7	2
	Lovran	4	11	32
	Matulji	9	2	1
	Mošć. Draga	4	3	8
	Opatija	47	69	24
	30 %	69	92	67
RIJEKA AND CONURBATION	Bakar	4	13	90
	Čavle	6	17	1
	Jelenje	0	0	10
	Kastav	13	21	55
	Klana	0	1	26
	Kostrena	3	16	20
	Kraljevica	0	5	50
	Rijeka	19	52	89
	Viškovo	2	8	79
8 %	47	135	420	

Sub-regios and smaller tourism destinations of the Kvarner region		YES	PARTLY	NO	
The CRIKVENICA-VINODOL RIVIERA (CVR)	Crikvenica	46	27	19	
	Dramalj	5	1	1	
	Jadranovo	4	1	2	
	Novi Vinodolski	30	38	25	
	Selce	1	3	2	
	Vinodol. općina	8	7	1	
	42 %	94	77	50	
GORSKI KOTAR	Brod Moravice	0	0	13	
	Čabar	0	1	9	
	Delnice	0	2	9	
	Fužine	4	4	6	
	Lokve	0	1	14	
	Mrkopalj	1	2	12	
	Ravna Gora	2	4	41	
	Skrad	0	5	45	
	Vrbovsko	3	3	38	
		4 %	10	22	187
Island CRES	Cres %	18	9	16	24
Island KRK	Baška	17	10	3	
	Dobrinj	15	11	4	
	City of Krk	22	17	16	
	Malinska-Dubašnica	36	21	10	
	Njivice	10	6	3	
	Omišalj	3	3	11	
	Punat	16	16	2	
	Vrbnik	3	16	11	
	39 %	131	116	84	
Island LOŠINJ	Mali Lošinj %	17	18	29	60
Island RAB	City of Rab	46	16	6	
	Općina Lopar	17	10	3	
		64 %	63	26	9
KVARNER - TOTAL	Absolutely	432	497	878	
	Relatively	23%	28%	48%	

Source: author's research results

In the opinion of the surveyed population of the Kvarner tourism destination as a whole, the average threat of the construction of apartments and flats is not big (23%), but there are significant differences between individual sub-regions and the smaller tourism destinations. Thus, the threat of this kind is felt the greatest among the population of the island of Rab (64%), the Crikvenica- Vinodol Riviera (42%), and on the island of Krk (39%). The excessive construction of tourist accommodation is perceived as the least threatening to tourism by the residents of Gorski Kotar (4%) and Rijeka and its conurbation (8%).

CONCLUSION

Based on a system of indicators that follow the basic segments of sustainable development, Croatia can be compared to the Mediterranean countries (signatories of the Barcelona Convention, UNEP/MAP, 2014) and thus improve the system of sustainable development planning and controlling, especially in the sensitive coastal area. Naturally planning, including spatial planning, cannot by itself bring success to the conceived sustainable development of a country or a region. This success can be achieved only if there is enough political support from “conscious and well-informed decision-makers” willing to decide, through co-operation and harmony with the other actors in development, on the goals and the ways to reach them. It should, however, be mentioned that neither the planners, and spatial planners especially, should be “technicians and bureaucrats”, but rather scientifically and professionally trained creative individuals who keep track of global trends and, approach planning with the help of various professions and constantly improve their technical and planning methods and scientific knowledge. Only cooperation of the politics and the profession can ensure future generations, but also future tourists, an economically developed and environmentally clean Croatia.

Balanced spatial planning and development must be related to the resources, the geographical position, the use of existing and the construction of new production capacities, human resources and traditional values. It must be based on a systematic planning of particular economic areas and respect the generally accepted principles of spatial preservation, international standards, and scientific and professional knowledge. Spatial planning and development is inseparable from the overall planning of economic development of a region and the country in general. Spatial planning most directly affects the economic development of any society and the individual, and therefore deserves a constant and expert care on all levels of society. In order to achieve the abovementioned, it is necessary to determine the local, regional, national, and European, spatial issues and problems. The solving of spatial problems, and its planning and organization, does not refer only to the planning and coordination of different land uses (environmental, natural and cultural heritage preservation), but also touches upon economics, law, social welfare, science and politics.

In today's time of great changes in the world and in Croatia, the issues of regional development and regional policy are monitored with particular care. In Croatia, unfortunately, these issues are approached from a political point of view. The scientific approach, necessary for realisation of space and regional economy, is still not included in the process of designing Croatian regional development. The absolute necessity for this inclusion was further confirmed by the attitudes of tourists, residents and tourism managers toward space as a limited resource. Croatia has to adapt its legislation to the European Union directives, but it is absolutely necessary that it establishes its own interest in the development of spatial planning and development. Croatia and its counties must provide an opportunity for sustainable regional development planning because that is the only way to enter the developed world without devastating their own living space.

Although the process of Croatia's accession to the European Union is, in public, mostly presented and justified from a political and economic point of view, the abovementioned makes it evident that the system of spatial planning will experience significant changes. Regional economical and spatial planning as a continuous and systematic process will be subjected to "strong" EU directives and will surely bring Croatia certain changes, in terms of understanding the meaning of spatial planning. Spatial development is an important element in the expansion of the EU and has a significant role in strengthening the objectives of the economic and social policy in the EU. Thus, it can be assumed that Croatia too will learn the meaning of this "instrument" for the implementation of a balanced sustainable development. Monitor progress in achieving sustainable development and providing greater political need spatial planning will prevent the devastation of living space and contribute to making informed policy decisions on the level of development of tourism destinations. Monitoring of the sustainable development progress and providing greater political support to spatial planning will prevent the devastation of the living space and contribute to making quality developmental policy decisions at the tourism destination level.

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