

**Turističke koncesije na pomorskom dobru u Hrvatskoj:
socioekonomski pogled na harmonizaciju koncesijskih politika u
Hrvatskoj u kontekstu europskog zatvorenog tržišta**
Urednik: akademik Nikola Bašić

**Tourist Concessions on the Maritime Domain in Croatia: A Socio-economic View
of the Harmonization of Concession Policies in Croatia in the Context of a
European Closed Market**

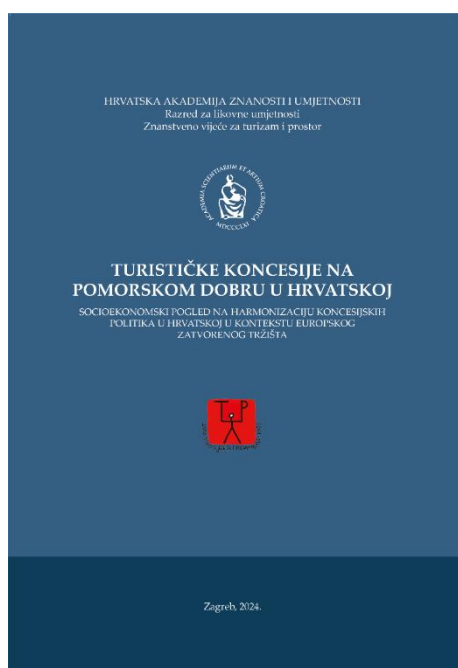
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Poljanec-Borić, S., Ivandić, N., & Lukić, A.

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The book reviewed for this special issue of the journal, dedicated to the 31st Colloquium of the Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems (CSRS) of the International Geographical Union (IGU), is closely connected with the main conference topic, namely "Contested rural spaces". Moreover, one of the book's contributors presented a paper published in the book. The book, titled "Tourist Concessions on the Maritime Domain in Croatia: Socio-economic view on the harmonisation of concession policies in Croatia in the context of a European closed market"

("Turističke koncesije na pomorskom dobru u Hrvatskoj: socioekonomski pogled na harmonizaciju koncesijskih politika u Hrvatskoj u kontekstu europskog zatvorenog tržišta") and published by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, explores the increasingly relevant topic of access to and management of the maritime domain, i.e. the sea and the coastal area belonging to it. Both aspects vary significantly among countries. In Croatia, the maritime domain is considered common good (*res communes omnium*), which is inalienable, cannot be traded (*res extra commercium*), and is not subject to prescription. However, this does not mean it is not used for economic purposes through concessions. While in many other countries concessions for industrial economic activities such as shipyards or for transportation purposes prevail, in Croatia tourism is increasingly becoming a very influential actor in this regard. Economic activities that constitute tourism directly generate around 25% of Croatian GDP. Furthermore, more than 90% of all tourist

arrivals and overnight stays are directly related to the maritime domain along the Adriatic coast. This results in a growing tendency to open the maritime domain to more intensive economic activity, especially in tourism. The specificity of tourism is that market competitiveness is heavily based on the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the area. For this reason, finding the right balance between opening and managing the maritime domain for economic purposes, on the one hand, and preventing long-term harmful, unsustainable, and unacceptable practices, on the other, is seen as a prerequisite for the future of the Croatian Adriatic coast.

The book aims to contribute both theoretically and practically to achieving this goal in an academic manner. Beside foreword, it consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, titled "Concessions in Croatian Tourism- Toward the Regulation of Current Institutional Asymmetries", the authors analyse the existing model of granting and monitoring tourism concessions in Croatia from the perspective of the global market and world society. This perspective suggests that the granting of concessions could become a means of peaceful land grab to achieve geostrategic competitive advantage. In this context, maritime property is under extreme pressure. Therefore, tourism concessions have strategic importance for Croatia due to the potential for land misuse. Given that maritime property is common good, socially efficient governance of scarce resources must be the operational goal of all concession policies, especially those in tourism. The analysis of public data on concessions in Croatia, as well as the system of reporting on the effects of concession policies, suggests that there are institutional asymmetries in the concession policy governance model. Ex ante and ex post conditions for granting and/or monitoring the effects of concessions are at the core of the problem. Therefore, the existing model is not socially efficient. Arguments for changing the model are elaborated with the aim of making national tourism concession governance resilient to covert intentions of land misuse and developing better institutional capacity for transparent governance of resources. For example, the authors deem it necessary to define tourist concessions by law and create a register of them (currently only scattered information exists), and to prescribe local participation in the processes of issuing tourist concessions, which are under the exclusive competence of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, thus decentralising tourism development policy.

The second chapter, titled "Comparative Analysis of Type and Number of Long-term Tourism Concessions on Maritime Property in Rovinj and Mali Lošinj in 2019 and 2020", presented at the Colloquium, uses a comparative analysis of Rovinj and Mali Lošinj, two highly developed and comparable tourist destinations on the Croatian Adriatic coast. The paper examines several issues related to the location, duration, and media perception of tourist concessions, with particular focus on the right of public access. The research is based on the geographical localisation of all identified concessions by type, duration, and concessionaire. Media perception is explored through discourse analysis of the full text of 125 relevant newspaper articles. The results show that there is no uniform public policy for monitoring tourist concessions in Croatia, which makes territorial planning and understanding the multiple potential impacts (spatial, economic, social, environmental) much more difficult. Of the 27 identified concessions in 34 locations, two local companies originating from historical tourism development can be recognised as dominant tourism concessionaires acting as oligopolies. In both cases, most of the attractive seaside locations have long-term concessions for tourism, with the concession in Rovinj having a longer duration (up to 33 years). This expected trend should create the need for stronger public-sector monitoring of active tourism concessions. The media promote the process of elitisation of nautical tourism (in the case of Rovinj) and advocate a significant extension of the concessions for the existing concessionaire. In the case of Mali Lošinj, the media reported on citizens' dissatisfaction with attempts to enclose maritime property for private purposes. International comparison shows the openness of the Croatian concession system to durations longer than economically justified.

The final chapter, titled “Tourism Development Project Kupari I in Croatia: Case Study”, explains the institutional conditions under which the Croatian government decided to grant a 99-year concession on maritime property in the municipality of Župadubrovačka, near UNESCO-protected Dubrovnik. The article is based on analysis of secondary sources and qualitative empirical research carried out through semi-structured interviews with a selected group of informants. The procedures for granting the concession, as well as other tenure permits related to the rights to build and use property adjacent to the maritime domain, are reconstructed in detail. The article also evaluates the impact of this tourism development project on national tourism development policies.

The book is the outcome of an interdisciplinary research project led by Dr Saša Poljanec-Borić and supported by the Foundation of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Sociological, economic, and geographical perspectives reveal numerous challenges in access to and management of the maritime domain. The authors warn against threats to the maritime domain that may arise from long-term concessions (such as the one granted near the City of Dubrovnik for 99 years) and propose stricter regulations, greater local community involvement, and the need for constant monitoring. This book may be useful for both academics and practitioners in land-use rights and concessions policies, particularly in tourist-oriented regions.

***The book (Croatian with English summaries) is freely available at:**

<https://dizbi.hazu.hr/d17b118n/main/r/oe/k1i/roek1inm5dap.pdf>

About the review author:

Aleksandar Lukić graduated in geography from the Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb in 2001 and enrolled in a postgraduate study programme on the geographic basis of spatial planning in the same year. He attended postdoctoral training at the Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, UK (2011). He currently serves as the head of the doctoral programme Geography: Space, Region, Environment, Landscape. His research interest mainly focuses on rural and sub-rural areas. He examines the theoretical approaches, typologies, and scenarios of development in rural areas, the regional and spatial planning of rural and suburban areas, and rural tourism and recreation. From the geographic aspect, he has researched the quality of life in city regions, shopping centres and cycling traffic. He is involved in applied research and has led or cooperated on many projects for the European Territorial Observatory Network (ESPON), Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, City of Zagreb Office for Strategic Planning and Development, and others. He is co-chair of the Commission for the Sustainability of Rural Systems of the International Geographic Union.