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## **Revitalization of Croatian Abandoned Coastal Industrial and Military Facilities as an Incentive for Local Community Development**

### **Abstract**

The coastal areas of Croatia have been in the process of transformation for more than three decades. Their social, recreational, and economic function is often not in the function of regional and local development. A special problem is buildings, often empty, unused, and left to devastation as an example of the complexity of the conversion process.

Coastal areas in the Croatian part of the Adriatic are characterized by a very mild climate, attractiveness, and investment potential. These are features that enable development but at the same time represent a trap of transitional and post-transitional growth, with intensive exploitation, concreting and development. This brings negative development effects in the long run and loses its developmental meaning.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the social opportunities and economic strength of the devastated coastal area with special reference to former military areas. The aim of this paper is to determine the possibilities of protection against increasingly aggressive exploitation of space and capital construction, which results in the destruction of the environment. The special goal is to determine the development scenario of revaluation of space and real estate that is predominantly owned by state on the case study of the city of Pula.

**Keywords:** coastal area, real estate, growth, development, Croatia, City of Pula, military base Muzil, SWOT analyse.

### **1. Introduction**

Coastal areas are almost the most exploited areas where there are numerous devastated and abandoned buildings. In Croatia areas and buildings, in addition to industrial areas, mostly had a military purpose. In the recent period, it is rare where a transformation for the benefit of the social community has taken place. At the same

time, diversification from military to civilian purposes did not achieve the desired aims. Determining the economic strength of areas left to devastation is a complex process that combines diverse and interdependent activities.

Former military zones, as can be seen in the City of Pula located in an attractive city area are left to decay. It is a devastating fact that some military and other facilities have not been transformed for production despite the excellent transport links to the inland. In order to achieve better usability and achieve certain development and economic effects, synergy of local and central government is necessary.

The subject of this paper is to explore the possibilities of revitalization of abandoned military facilities on the example of the City of Pula. The purpose of this paper is to define coastal areas as a spatial development basis in order to create conditions for social and economic activity. The methodological framework is based on the analysis of the coastal area of the city of Pula in the context of the coastal area of Croatia.

The research included a review of the available literature of different sources, but it should be noted that this is a complex problem that requires an interdisciplinary approach, which is why authors from different fields were cited.

## 2. Theoretical framework

A review of the available literature indicates numerous articles, studies and expert studies on the topic of economic potential and strength of the devastated coastal area. Controversies are taking place dynamically, with special emphasis on military coastal areas that have been abandoned for decades. The issue has been very complex, controversial and topical since the 1990s. The authors [3] find that socio-economic relations between the coast and the hinterland largely depend on the location and structure of economic activities. Measures and actions taken in this direction should: (i) activate the working and production potentials of the coast and hinterland, (ii) prevent the accumulation of people and goods on the coast, (iii) prevent the stratification of the hinterland population and (iv) stop the deterioration of production goods in the hinterland.

Rent is defined as income that is in character or money is acquired by a certain person (rentier) without one's own work or entrepreneurial activity, on the basis of fulfilled payments or ownership of real estate. According to scientific document [1] land rent, is defined as an economic form of payment for the use of land ownership.

The authors [5] give significant attention to the issue of construction site rent and conclude that rent represents the income earned by the owner of a natural resource (in this case construction site land) based on the economic use of the property in a certain period. Some author [16] processes with the issue of coastal zone management and finds that the assumption that all interests can be reconciled is purely theoretical. In reality, different groups of potential users have different, most often conflicting

interests, and that politics is a necessary mechanism for resolving conflicts. The author Kadrov [6], systematically addressed the issue of conversion of military real estate in Croatia. They state that the whole problem of conversion has been simplified and reduced to the issue of real estate transfer, due to which all other important elements such as environmental pollution and natural and cultural values have been lost. The thoughts of some authors on legal solutions are very similar. Non-compliance with legal procedures and regulations resulting in favouring large capital is discussed. The Real Estate Valuation Act [17] defines the positional characteristics and regulates the market valuation of space. However, the institute of position rent, which is especially important for attractive maritime areas in Croatia, has not until today come to life. There were recommendations and solutions of experts that the investor is obliged to pay the difference in price if the repurposed area is an agricultural zone or green area and the price was significantly lower than the price after conversion to construction area but this is not realized in law. Furthermore, investors who do not start the project within the set deadline must pay an adequate price for land conversion. Effective coastal zone management and the position annuity institute are correlated. Author Krtalić, [9] talks about payment in the form of rent, especially in the event that the implementation of a certain construction project would be jeopardized in financial terms due to the payment of contributions. He states that when paying contributions in the form of annuities, the due contribution must be paid in a maximum of ten annual payments.

According to authors [6], the largest number of studies and analysis of the conversion of military premises relate to Western Europe and the United States (USA). The author states [20 in 6] that in the USA in the early 1990s, it was established that the conversion process did not follow the planned dynamics, while local communities indicated that appropriate opportunities were missed. In order to speed up the process, the presidential administration (Clinton era) introduced changes in the existing legislation, where it was especially emphasized that the redevelopment should be oriented towards job creation to carry out accelerated cleaning of contaminated areas, facilitate access to sources of financial assistance and increase funding for development.

Ponzini [15] highlights that the different conditions of military assets and the variety of the urban and regional contexts and the national reference frameworks constitute challenges which differ in many aspects. Notwithstanding this, some forms of comparison, experimentation and reciprocal learning can be envisaged.

The authors [14] cites the Swedish case of conversion of a military base on the island of Gotland, although less complex and problematic in an urban context, shows how strong public influence (under the auspices of the agency) and a clear urban plan provides a legal framework for conversion of military zones, can give positive results both in financial terms and in effective urban and economic revitalization.

### 3. Croatian Coastal Zone Development and Features

The analysis of the coastal area of Croatia included the strategic and conceptual development of coastal areas, especially abandoned and devastated ex-military zones, which are located in the most attractive positions in the Croatian area of the Adriatic. The emphasis is on the necessity of spatial planning in the function of economic development, and the legal and institutional framework of planning which can be an aggravating circumstance in preserving the coastal area from its usurpation.

Croatia is continuously facing a tendency to migrate from the inland to the sea and an increased concentration of population in the coastal zone. The causes are the unsystematic development of tourism and the rapidly growing requisite for the exploitation of marine resources. The fact is that coastal areas that had a military purpose were largely left untouched and preserved. There is a great comparative advantage especially considering that in the countries of the former Eastern bloc these areas are extremely contaminated. For example, Estonia, whose areas abandoned by the former Soviet army (1.9% of Estonia's territory) were more than half polluted by various toxic chemical compounds, petroleum products, paints, unexploded ordnance, water pollution. The total environmental damage in Estonia was estimated at around 3.6 billion euros.

Author Miller [10] warns that with the Land Reform of 1991 most of the land was returned to its former owners, so many military objects became private property. It further finds that much of the area, which was under military administration for many years and was previously privately owned, is still inaccessible to citizens.

Author Oevermann [12] explain a successful example of the conversion and revaluation of the devastated coastal area of the city of Liverpool. An example is the Rope Walks city district. Rope Walks, a trading district mostly built in the Gregorian style (1714-1830) consisting of merchant houses and warehouses preceding a complex of harbour docks and warehouses extending towards the east bank of the Mersey River, was the most devastated and deserted neighbourhood. As a result of a £40m ten-year renovation program dedicated to buildings and public space, the area has become one of the liveliest commercial and residential spaces in the city centre.

There are several positive examples of the conversion of abandoned industrial and military areas in Croatia, but it should be emphasized that most of the conversion was on land and along the coast and coastal zone. These are: the coal mine complex in Labin, the Lazareti in Dubrovnik, the French pavilion and factory Zagrepčanka, Biserka, Jedinstvo and Nada Dimić in Zagreb, the Karlo Rojc barracks in Pula, Samogor on the island of Vis, the Hartera complex, Rikard Benčić and the Ivex warehouse buildings in Rijeka, project Unconquered city in Karlovac, Aquarium in Split.

In the last 20 years, a conflict of interest between certain groups of potential investors has been expressed in Croatia. The main reason for this is the lack of a national strategy for Integrated development treatment of coastal areas. The end consequence of intensified intervention in this area is excessive construction and

especially uncontrolled expansion of construction along the coastal area. Inadequate and mostly illegal construction (of questionable quality) along the coastline is not accompanied by an adequate number of devices and plants for urban wastewater treatment and they flow uncontrollably into the sea. This decreases the quality of the sea in the area of these settlements, i.e. cities, ports or tourist zones. The devaluation of the quality of the coastal area is devastating.

The Spatial Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia [19], establishes that in the period between 1967 and 1972, Croatia, in cooperation with the United Nations (UN), developed a plan and program for the spatial planning of the Adriatic area, i.e. carried out spatial and environmental planning of the Adriatic area: northern, central and southern Adriatic - Regional Spatial Plan of the Southern Adriatic, 1968, and Coordination Regional Spatial Plan of the Upper Adriatic, 1972, and its immediate hinterland. In addition to the above methodology of regional plans, the topic of sea planning as an area of special value has appeared in these plans.

Today, it is crucial to be aware of the potential repercussions that have already happened in Croatia and that threaten to happen with the radical exploitation of coastal areas. The sea and the coast as resources are extremely important for Croatia and its population. It is important to point out the mechanisms by which possible pollution of the ecological system can be controlled, given the large number of heterogeneous economic activities in the area. This refers to maritime transport and large interventions in space due to the construction of important roads and communal infrastructure. Landscape changes due to the construction of marinas, passenger terminals, maritime economic activities, and the exploitation of marine mineral resources (e.g. gas exploitation) should not be neglected.

The fact is that over-construction in Croatia was caused by human activity and is one of the major and huge problem in the coastal area. The consequence of this is the example of the most developed tourist region of Istria and the creeping devastation of space, especially on the east coast, which is not so much in front of the public, primarily because it is sparsely populated.

Intensive increase in the level of tourism development and relatively minor funds invested in adequate treatment of wastewater treatment of hotel chains and apartment complexes has led to large amounts of wastewater polluting the environment (sea) in coastal areas. This has caused significant difficulties throughout the ecosystem. A bigger problem is the disposal of solid and biodegradable waste, which very often ends up in illegal dumps. This is more pronounced on the islands due to limited space.

Therefore, it is important to direct activities in order to create institutional or legal regulations that would enable the ultimate goal of devastated coastal areas to become a generator of economic development of local communities.

Croatia is a signatory to the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), but problems in the implementation of integrated coastal zone management are still visible. According to the authors [8], it is important to note the need for more efficient

management and the establishment and maintenance of appropriate use and sustainable levels of development and activities in the coastal area, and over time improving the physical status of the coastal environment in accordance with international and national regulations and standards.

Experience so far shows that a systematic approach to planning (especially in the case of the city of Pula where these development projects would spend large spatial resources, i.e. areas) would more fully assess their possible primarily economic development, and then social and spatial.

#### **4. Analysis of Economic Strength and Social Opportunities of the Devastated Coastal Area, City of Pula**

The transition period that Croatia was going through was characterized by a drastic decline in industrial production, a poor investment climate, a sharp rise in unemployment and the impoverishment of the majority of the population. At the same time, the traffic and geographical position of Croatia is extremely favourable. It is determined by the fact that it is in direct contact with large spatial regions of Europe, the Mediterranean, Central Europe, the Alps, and the Balkan Peninsula. This was not exploited, so abandoned and devastated coastal areas formed and were infrastructurally equipped. So far, no real or potential investor interest in these areas has been explored.

According to the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Property, in Croatia [11], there have been attempts to implement development projects, but to date everything has remained only to express interest. An example is the former, today abandoned military zone Muzil, for which two non-binding bids were received in 2016 in a tender announced by the Ministry of State Property.

Military zone Muzil is one of the most complex military zones on the Adriatic. In the last decade, Muzil has been designated as a non-perspective military property. It spreads in the western part of the Bay of Pula and is directly connected to the city centre via the coastal area.

The city of Pula is more than 3000 years old, and it was built on the hill Kaštel where the first hillfort settlement, the fortress of Histrans, was built. True urban history begins with the Romans and continues over the centuries. The twentieth century in Pula was a century of multiple changes of government, with the departures and arrivals of sections of the population, certain social and ethnic groups, especially after the First and after the Second World War. In the second half of the 20th century, the city of Pula developed into the largest Istrian city, important for its two main economic activities: industry, mostly shipbuilding and tourism. The area of the city has a distinctly indented coastline, and a spatial ambience of high ecological and visual-aesthetic value. [4]

The Austro-Hungarian fortifications on Muzil determined the status of a cultural property. Some parts of Muzil consist of steep cliffs and a forest area which, in contact with the flat surface of the sea, contribute to exceptional visual attractiveness. Because

of that special attention is paid to environmental protection. The traffic connection is satisfactory. The coastal area is characterized by rich vegetation cover, beautiful beaches, and adequate depths for docking larger vessels. The attractiveness of Muzil is emphasized since it is the highest point in Pula. It is intertwined with partially paved roads, potentially future bike paths. The complexity of Muzil's problems is manifested in the polarization of perspective determination. The options that Muzil should be aimed at increasing the quality of city life or that Muzil is a potential resource to be exploited are in constant correlation.

A tender was conducted from which the construction permit is visible (only) 20% of 170 ha on the extent to which the Muzil peninsula extends [2]. It is the first obstacle that has repelled investors. This identified problems in terms of over-generating dependence on tourism. The conversion or greenfield investment in Muzil, and then other military zones in the city of Pula (Saccorgiana and Puntizela), and beyond Šibenik (TEF, Kupari) is conceptually designed (according to the tender) for the realization of tourism development. Experience shows that such a concept of economic development does not focus and does not involve innovation or new technologies, and especially not local business people and the community. Other activities such as agriculture, industry, fisheries, aquaculture and sports and recreational facilities for the population were neglected. Proper organisation and putting the space into operation, given their great attractiveness and development potential, still requires more than hiring cheap, lower paid and low-skilled labour in the hotel and tourist facilities.

The area of Muzil should be one of the development resources of the city of Pula that would benefit, both direct and indirect benefits for the local community and the economy. The current policy of music management is not in the function of conversion and realization of benefits, since there is no income even from the position of rent. It is estimated that revenues will also be generated through the fragmentation of Muzil, by leasing parts or areas of the area. The unacceptability of current situations is manifested in the fact that Muzil does not use investors due to lack of money or for some other reasons but does not use other social groups since access to Muzil is prohibited. Due to inaction and non-valuation, the opportunity to gentrify Muzil was missed. All of the above is in collision given the attractiveness of Muzil.

The fact that no revenues are generated either from the concession or from the position annuity, requires the acceleration of the process of conversion of Muzil. Some details about Muzil project are given on Figure 1.





Figure 1: Detail of the Muzil development project

Source: [http://www.brijunirivijera.hr/lokacije/lokacija\\_muzil](http://www.brijunirivijera.hr/lokacije/lokacija_muzil), Razvojni program "Brijuni Rivijera", [Accessed on October 5th 2020].

## 5. Results and Discussion

Spatial planning of coastal areas and the establishment of maritime spatial planning is the starting point that determines economic and socio-demographic development. Due to the growing capital pressure, spatial plans are undergoing numerous changes and quit to be in the development or function of spatial protection. The situation is not the same everywhere, but the fact of over-construction as a result of poor and inadequate coastal zone management is worrying.

This can be seen through almost all potential development projects in the Croatian part of the Adriatic. Namely, in all international tenders, the state or local self-government undertook to build, upgrade or repurpose all necessary logistics or infrastructure (water supply, sewerage, access roads, etc.) to the potential investor to the area, i.e. the investment zone. Accordingly, most of the coastal belt does not remain free, but is brought to purpose.

Author Kovačić [7] state that the environmental impact assessment procedure in Croatia is an integral part of facilities that can significantly harm the environment, and the obligation to implement this procedure was introduced in 1980 by the Spatial Planning and Spatial Planning Act.

The analysis of the General Urban Plan of the City (GUP) of Pula concludes that the construction of many hotels is planned in the entire coastal area of the city of Pula and that almost no part of the coastal area is planned to be preserved.

It is necessary to plan the arrangement of the entire coastal area if the intention of its intensive exploitation is realized. The state, local self-government and competent institutions should supervise the investor by their responsible actions, who should at the same time strictly adhere to the laws and regulations related to coastal zone management, and especially sustainable development. It is therefore necessary to use instruments and measures of supervision and penalties.

In some locations (e.g. the island of Vir), devastation and fragmentation have become so widespread that the natural landscape and typical Adriatic coastal landscapes have been irretrievably lost. Garbage is a special problem especially during the tourist season when the number of residents and tourists is rapidly increasing. Therefore, new solutions are needed, dimensioning of construction and minimization of construction areas, in order to stop the growing capital pressures on coastal areas.

The conversion of the military zone Muzil, in a way to build a nautical tourism port, hotels and appropriate recreational facilities, would achieve many direct and indirect effects. As the authors explain [8], the construction of a nautical tourism port and other facilities has positive effects on the local community by employing the local population, through tax, concession and other benefits and affects the vision of space through conversion and design. The greatest significance is in the fact that the conversion should enable unhindered access to citizens.

Muzil has great value both spatially and marketwise. Based on the quality of relief diversity, Austro-Hungarian fortifications of exceptional cultural and historical value, preserved due to the long-term presence of the military element, already arranged system of ports and breakwaters. That is the potential that needs to be put into function.

## 6. Proposals and Measures

Coastal areas were and are the primary areas where people draw resources. Due to exhaustion and devastation, coastal areas today require an urgent change in the perception of the coastal area as a source of enrichment. It is clear that there is a lack of will to manage in a way that accepts and understands the importance that the coastal area has for people, especially the direct and indirect benefits that should be visible at the local level. The local community as a whole should have benefits, otherwise over-exploitation makes no sense.

The research points out some simultaneous economic value and vulnerability of Muzil through the possible ecological degradation of the landscape as a repercussion of diverse human activities. Therefore, the scenario of landscape change during planning and design should be approached seriously and responsibly due to the sensitivity and importance of the space.

On these values and a holistic approach, it is necessary to look for a stronghold of the future well-thought-out system of planning, protection, and intervention in the coastal area. The implementation of maritime spatial planning is of crucial importance

and strategic interest. This would enable better recognition, protection, promotion, and sustainable use of the value of the coastal area.

Recently, Croatia is in a situation of increasing attack on the coastal area, and exploitation is intensifying. Such a mode of exploitation causes a radical change in the environment. Many coastal towns, cities and even islands are in a position where the demands for uninterrupted communication have increased enormously. The consequences of these requirements are: the need for technical (construction) intervention in the communal infrastructure of coastal areas. Discord between investors and the local community is irreversibly threatening the coastal area. Devastated coastal areas in Croatia are predominantly state-owned, which further complicates management and use. The decentralization of governance to regional and local communities should certainly be accelerated and the practical application of legal provisions in terms of supervision and penalties should be improved. In the medium and long term, Croatia has the opportunity to change in terms of understanding and accepting the coastal area as a resource that is expendable.

Author Perović [13] point out that sustainable urbanism aims is to create a space of human values, a city that will respect the needs of users, recovery and rehabilitation of existing urban structure, increase urban qualities, promote new authentic and recognizable functional and identity values of the city. The Guide to Urban Regeneration for the Mediterranean [21] states that in order to achieve the goals, it is necessary to reform inefficient public administration and adopt better and more concrete legal solutions. The adoption of special legal acts is often necessary for two reasons: to lay the foundations for public-private partnership (development of legal regulations, development rights, economic instruments, etc.), and to be the basis for the process and decision-making.

Recommendations and measures are summarized through strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The following, authors present SWOT analysis of the problem and the subject of the research.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High environmental awareness of the local community about the need for conversion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public sensitivity due to potential misuse of conversion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong citizen participation in the conversion process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investors are primarily interested in short-term or medium-term profits, not long-term sustainable development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolved property relations (one titular)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to make decisions for appropriate conversion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural benefits of area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient recognized area value</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility to use money from EU funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delays in decision-making due to the COVID 19 pandemic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High investor interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal uncertainty due to frequent legal changes'</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct and indirect benefit for local government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complicated decision-making process and lengthy conversion process</li> </ul>

Valorization and value analysis of Muzil is an opportunity for economic exploitation of space. The Muzil area is seen as a resource for the construction and economic use of capacities already built and newly built. The main feature of Muzil is the opportunity to introduce positional rent in the constellation with the use of that space. However, a big dilemma is in which direction the rent will be reinvested (directed). All stakeholders involved in the process must articulate a market evaluation of the Muzil space. Croatia's permanent commitment to designing economic or development policy based on positional rent has been noticed due to the extremely favorable geographical position.

The authors considered that the introduction of positional rent, bring benefits the local community. It is estimated that this measure would prevent negative economic consequences. The purpose of the position annuity institute would be to prevent the interest of speculative capital in land conversion.

## 7. Conclusion

Global trends as expansion of cities, urbanization, economy, increasingly indicate the complexity of the problem of devastated military coastal zones that are not in economic function. The repercussion of inaction for many years is the degradation of cities in the visual, economic, cultural, identity and other sense. On the other hand, these areas are of great development potential and correlate with the management of public goods. Proper governance policy is very important especially because public goods

are often the subject of political and capital games. New values, effects, potentially new jobs or new city identity centres as significant factors of city development indicate that it is necessary to achieve synergy in achieving the set goals. The SWOT analysis confirmed the results of the research and revealed all the weaknesses and at the same time opportunities for the revitalization of abandoned areas.

The research points out the importance of introducing a positional annuity that would bring a number of positive effects and solve some problems of investing in abandoned and devastated coastal areas until the facilities are maintained. The reasons for not introducing positional rent for military zones are mainly underdeveloped social awareness of its importance, reluctance of government structures and weakening of the global economy.

The complexity of the process of conversion revers that there is no perfect model of conversion. In this sense and along the way, the challenges that the some of this process could face will require new knowledge and skills, including those that are not considered typical economic and legal. Therefore, the conversion is of vital national, regional, and local interest, give positive result in order to preserve and protect valuable coastal areas.

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