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WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO DECIDE? PULA AND THE PROBLEM OF DEMILITARIZED URBAN ZONE

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Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, Muzil, Pula, przestrzeń miejska, planowanie przestrzenne

Summary

In 2007, the Croatian army decided to close its military base on the Muzil peninsula, which is a part of the city of Pula. Muzil hosts about 20 percent of the city; moreover, it is located in a very attractive area with the view on the seaside and the city's historical center. After the city received the area, negotiations began to decide about the future of the demilitarized land. This paper discusses the attitudes of two main actors of the public debate: the city council supported by the central authorities of Croatia and a nongovernmental organization established by a number of residents of Pula. The former wanted to transform the demilitarized area into an elite tourist resort, while the latter proposed opening the peninsula to residents to reintegrate the postmilitary area with the city. The two attitudes are related to different ideas of usefulness and the city as a community of residents. The right to space reflects the fundamental question of participation in the public debate. Moreover, Pula can be seen as an example of the city, where extensive and uncontrolled development of tourism violates the interests of the local community.

KTO MA PRAWO DECYDOWAĆ? PULA I PROBLEM DEMILITARYZACJI PRZESTRZENI MIEJSKIEJ

Streszczenie

W 2007 roku chorwacka armia postanowiła zamknąć swoją bazę na półwyspie Muzil, znajdującym się na obszarze miasta Pula na Istrii. Muzil zajmuje około 20% obszaru miasta, usytuowany jest ponadto w centrum atrakcyjnej okolicy. Pozyskanie tego terenu otworzyło burzliwy okres negocjacji zmierzających do ustalenia sposobu zagospodarowania tego terenu. Artykuł omawia postawy dwóch głównych aktorów: rady miejskiej, wspieranej w swych dążeniach przez władze centralne Chorwacji, oraz stowarzyszenia obywatelskiego, powołanego oddolnie z inicjatywy

mieszkańców Puli. Pierwsi forsowali pomysł stworzenia na obszarze zdemilitaryzowanym obiektów turystyki elitarniej, podczas gdy drudzy optowali za otwarciem półwyspu dla mieszkańców miasta i zintegrowaniem przestrzeni z miastem. Postawy te wiążą się z odmiennymi koncepcjami użyteczności miejskiej oraz miasta jako wspólnoty mieszkańców. Tytułowa kwestia prawa do przestrzeni odzwierciedla konkretne kwestie wagi i uczestnictwa w debacie publicznej. Pula okazuje się ponadto jednym z miast, w których rozwój turystyki okazuje się zagrożeniem dla interesów stałych mieszkańców.

Can tourism become an ideology? Some examples from Croatian cities reveal that touristification¹ can represent a real problem from the perspective of the local community. It is the case of Pula, an ancient and beautiful city on the Adriatic shore, south of the Istrian peninsula, where the Croatian army had conceded a vast territory in the very center of the city to the state. The local authorities with the support of the government sought to transform that space into a touristic area for rich clients. Such idea encountered strong opposition from the local community. The problem exposes a set of crucial questions. First, it concerns the question of agency and the right to decide about urban space. Then, there is the problem of the position of local residents in comparison with the privileged group of rich tourists in a neo-colonial perspective. Third, the crucial question is how the conflict between the needs of locals and tourist infrastructure could be resolved. I will tackle the first two points because the latter concerns more the local politics and strategies of negotiation.

I will discuss the question of the social representation of space, basing on the sources related to the debate, sometimes very vigorous, which developed in the public sphere in Istria and in general Croatian media. The main frame of analysis in this paper is the question of the right to space² as its social representation.

¹ Touristification is a relatively new term that refers to the impact of mass tourism on cities and the landscape. Most often, touristification is linked to suspiciousness toward large-scale tourism. A large number of papers have been already published on places like Barcelona, Lisbon, or Prague, which show the negative aspects of mass tourism. Cf. as an example, Claire Colomb, Johannes Novy, eds., *Protest and Resistance in the Tourist City* (London–New York: Routledge, 2016). Croatia, where the belief that tourism is likely to be the remedy for all economic problems, neglected such reflection until very recently.

² The right to the city, the space, or the streets are frequent phrases now encountered throughout the whole world. That question has become familiar to the social sciences after the “reclaim the streets” movement, described in Naomi Klein’s book *No Logo*, works of David Harvey, Marshall Berman, and experimental participative governance in Porto Alegre in Brazil. It embraces problems of political participation, role, and rights of different agents; above all the tension between local governments, residents, and investors or the real estate market. Also, vide Charles Montgomery, *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

Urban space and the conflict of interests

The contemporary city of Pula was created primarily around the navy, then the civil port, and the industry.³ Picturesque green areas in the city center, which I saw every day when I first visited, hid old and new military facilities. It was not only Austria-Hungary but also Yugoslavia and independent Croatia that maintained important military corps in Pula. Before 2007, the area encompassing the Muzil peninsula and the terrain along the western coast was closed off, controlled by the military, and exempt from the control and intervention of local government organizations. It was only after 2007 that the city began to supervise this part of the urban space. As a result, the question arose of how the area should be developed. The right to the city seems crucial when considering the future of demilitarized areas. In a 2009 monograph on spatial policies published in Warsaw, researchers from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and geography asked themselves this question.⁴ The issue also contains a second, implied question, of agents who/which should have influence on the decision process regarding an organism as complicated as a city. Several main contributing factors can be identified. First, specialists must play an important role as experts in the construction and management of the city. I mean here urban planners and architects, the people who by virtue of their education, knowledge, and general formation can manage the development of large urban centers. They know what spatial elements should receive what functions, they can predict the ways in which the inhabitants will behave and use specific types of space. It is the planners who should know how to effectively use the values of the area and buildings and organize them to make the life of the inhabitants better.

However, the fundamental problem is that planning stems not only from a pragmatic assessment of measurable, objective factors. On the contrary, planning mostly emerges from a vision of society and the relationship between space and the human community of its inhabitants. Space can be shaped, but when shaped by an expert, it will influence people. Urban projects described

³ For a general outlook on the history of Pula, vide Darko Dukovski, *Povijest Pule: deterministički kaos i jahači Apokalipse* (Pula: Istarski ogranak Društva hrvatskih književnika, 2011). Krno Kardov, "Muzil: moja vizija, moji snovi," in *Kome pripadaju bivše vojne nekretnine? Iskustva prenamjene u Hrvatskoj*, eds. Lidija Knežević, Nives Rogoznica (Zagreb: Centar za mirovne studije i Zavod za sociologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu, 2014), 99–136, writes in his chapter an excessive essay on the history of Muzil's militarization and the destiny of the peninsula with a detailed survey of the civil movement after the exit of the Croatian army. A detailed and exhaustive step-by-step agenda can be found in the first number of *Otvoreni Muzil*, January 2009 (<http://www.muzil-starter.org/>).

⁴ Bohdan Jałowiecki, ed., *Czyje jest miasto?* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2009).

in Wade Graham's *Dream Cities* were based on the analysis of observable facts and phenomena, but they took shape thanks to the vision of their authors, who were guided by a goal that could not be reduced to solely pragmatic issues.⁵ The city of Le Corbusier or Jane Jacob assumes completely different solutions for the same modern populations struggling with the same challenges from the outset. We may argue that a car is a symbol and a guarantor of freedom, but others will say it is a factor that destructively revolutionizes the functionality of streets. Some people prefer small shops and strolling along the street, but certain architects would defend rational concentrations of trade in large shopping centers, and so on. These questions largely depend on the values the planners follow, how they imagine the ideal local community, and despite the similar civilizational context, the urban planners' suggestions may be diametrically different.⁶ For instance, the team of authors who created the concept of Warsaw's Ursynów district tried to reconstruct a space conducive to contacts and safety; they intended to restore the street, the main orientation element of the housing estate, to the residents. The layout of residential homes, public use buildings, commercial and transport routes was governed by a certain vision, which definitely countered the previously dominant ideas for a functional housing estate, by implementing Le Corbusier's urban concept.⁷

Therefore, we enter a problematic area – that of values – that can never be considered undisputed. Hence, the local authorities may be an arbitrator in determining the direction of development. The elected city council is supposed to represent the interests of its residents: it is the residents who elect those to whom they delegate the power to make decisions in the name of the community. In most administration systems, at least in Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina,

⁵ Cf. Wade Graham, *Dream cities: Seven urban ideas that shape the world* (New York: Harper/ Harper Collins Publishers, 2016).

⁶ The literature on urban planning is immense. For different approaches, traditions, and contemporary trends, vide Grażyna Korzeniak, ed., *Zintegrowane planowanie rozwoju miast* (Kraków: Instytut Rozwoju Miast, 2011). There seems no need to explain the key notion of contemporary urbanism, i.e. sustainable planning: it generally means a search for the balance between the needs of humans and the environment, on the one hand, and between the local government, specialists' voice, and the views of local residents, on the other hand. Planning is deeply related to the question of ideas and social representations. One very clear example concerns the idea that highways are a necessity for a well-managed city. A highway is seen as a symbol of usefulness, rational planning, and a need. Still, such an idea can be questioned. But Agnes Deboulet and Mona Fawaz convincingly show that the development of a highway network could be seen as an instrument that helps to destroy local communities and disperse unwilling classes far to the outskirts. Cf. Agnes Deboulet, Mona Fawaz, "Contesting the legitimacy of urban restructuring and highways in Beirut's irregular settlements," in *Cities and sovereignty*, eds. Diane Emily Davis and Nora Ruth Libertun de Duren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 117–151.

⁷ Lidia Pańków, *Bloki w słońcu. Krótka historia Ursynowa Północnego* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2016).

it is the local government that decides whether to adopt zoning and regulatory plans, and the relevant local government bodies issue building permits, interfering with developers' plans depending on local regulations. To what extent do their decisions reflect the interests of the inhabitants, and to what extent do they result from a well-thought-out policy? Answers to this question must vary, depending on the circumstances. It is also difficult to study the decision process, which is probably linked to various factors: ensuring investment, protecting the environment, sometimes stimulating tourism. Such expectations may often come in contradiction. Graham shows this in his book on the example of the city policies in Bogota and Vancouver. The decision to build bike paths and invest in a series of inexpensive buses instead of automotive arteries can be seen as rational but also ideological: it reduces the amount of pollution, facilitates the transport of a larger number of people, but investments go to poorer districts and promote egalitarian policies.

Muzil and the Brijuni Rivijera project

The relinquishment of a large area of Pula challenged the city authorities to define the most important values for the future of the local community. Once again, for the political community, the key process is to define values, on the basis of which a vision of development is formed and only then does it make the specific investment.⁸ As we saw at the beginning, the spatial development plan is a derivative of the idea of an ideal city, formed by the knowledge, experience, or expectations of each responsible person. As we can see in the illustration below, Muzil is in a key location. Therefore, it was not only the question of the development of one plot of land or areas on the outskirts but also of the area the development which will affect the reception of the city center; and thus the whole city. For the civil movement "Volim Pulu" (I love Pula), it was crucial to leave Muzil open and its integration into the city space. A newspaper published and distributed by "Volim Pulu" was named *Otvoreni Muzil*, which means "Open Muzil." The first issue offered a manifesto in which we can read: "We want to open Muzil! We want to stand against the unjust process of planning the future of this area without the knowledge and cooperation of our residents. Pula and Muzil cannot be separated anymore. Its walls must go down!"⁹ The true urban space should be free of fences, walls, and any kind of separators which prevent a free movement, dividing the common

⁸ The question of values does not reflect any idealistic idea of governance but is closely related to the social praxis. Cf. Manuel Castells, *Wiek informacji: ekonomia, społeczeństwo, kultura*, vol. 2: *Siła tożsamości*, trans. Sebastian Szymański (Warszawa: PWN, 2008): 21–27.

⁹ *Otvoreni Muzil*, no. 1 (2009): 4.

good – space – into smaller pieces of land in private hands. The openness of free space connotes freedom, community, and togetherness, which are likely to be associated with the idea of democracy, but also a common responsibility. Michael Hardt in an interview for *Otvoreni Muzil* emphasizes that the questions of democracy and control over space are inseparable.¹⁰ On the one hand, control over space allows one to control community's resources. On the other, it divides a community into a set of different conflictual agents, who seek the profit for their own, disregarding the common good. The civil movement “Volim Pulu” – a cooperation of various agents – acted in favor of the integration, opposing another separation of the peninsula proposed by the project “Brijuni Rivijera.”



The central position of the Muzil peninsula can be clearly seen on the map above. Muzil is the area encircled with the red line. A large green zone is situated almost directly on the opposite side of the bay, vis a vis of the city center with the most important monument, the Arena. It also is a large territory with complicated access from the main streets. In the upper left, there is a small piece of the Brijuni archipelago. In a word, this location is highly attractive, though it covers a large part of the city territory.¹¹

¹⁰ Cf. “Pitanje prostora i eksperimentiranje s demokracijom nerazdvojni su” [interview with Michael Hardt], *Otvoreni Muzil*, no. 6 (2016): 4–6.

¹¹ Illustration by the author, on the basis of a map available on Google Maps (<https://www.google.com/maps/@44.8852679,13.7460906,17690m/data=!3m1!1e3>).

The question that social agents are supposed to resolve when tackling the problem of the demilitarized area of Muzil is what solution will be useful for the city. Work on the Brijuni Rivijera project continues since 2010. This is a plan to develop the area at four locations – Pineto, Hidrobaza, Sveta Katarina Island, and the Muzil peninsula – which belong to the city of Pula and are located opposite the picturesque Brijuni (Brioni) archipelago. It was supported as a strategic plan by the government of the Republic of Croatia, and by a decision of July 23, 2010, both state and local administration bodies were obliged to actively support the project. By a decision of September 12, 2011, Brijuni Rivijera has been declared a project of “particular importance to the Republic of Croatia.” Therefore, the project was included in a group of strategic projects, whose development and implementation is supported by the central government and is supposed to foster the overall economic and social development of the region.¹² In the official presentation of the project, we read: “The main development goal is the creation of a spatial and functional whole with the character of a tourist ‘riviera,’ with a high environmental quality offer along with a positive economic and social impact. Moreover, clean-up of devastated sections will be equally important, as well as maintenance and protection of the natural and man-made value of the space.”¹³

In this short description for a pamphlet – all the more valuable due to the condensed notions and ideas – we notice the impact of sustainable development, already popular at the time. This is indicated by the equal emphasis placed on created and economically active space and the natural environment. Moreover, the pamphlet also discusses the atmosphere of the location as a value: the environmental quality, which could also be translated literally as the atmosphere quality of the location. Thus, planners not only focus only on investments in tourist infrastructure, but they are also aware that the atmosphere, mood, and overall characteristic of the space are equally important to encourage tourist stays and correspond to current trends. Tourists like to choose “sustainable” locations where they can forget about the destructive impact of tourism on the environment. On the other hand, the area outlined in the project description is definitely to become a tourist destination (a riviera!) and it is its designation for tourism activities that will determine its value and future appearance, as well as its applications.

¹² Cf. “Odluka o utvrđivanju popisa trgovačkih društava i drugih pravnih osoba od strateškog i posebnog interesa za Republiku Hrvatsku,” *Narodne Novine*, no. 120 (2013), 2579; “Plan upravljanja državnom imovinom Republike Hrvatske za 2015. godinu,” *Narodne Novine*, no. 142 (2014), 2673.

¹³ *Glavne značajke prostora i cjeline obuhvata*, http://www.brijunirivijera.hr/program/glavne_znacajke_prostora_i_cjeline_obuhvata (acc. 10.08.2017), trans. by the author. A list of various legal acts and other documents that form the basis for the Brijuni Rivijera project can be found on that portal as well.

As late as in 2013, this area of Pula appeared to be somewhat neglected or, at the very least, unmodernized.¹⁴ Things looked much different than in the center of Pula, or in the Istrian resorts teeming with life and modern infrastructure. The calmness, slowness, and a kind of disorder clashed with the vision from the catalogs and resembled a free space of unforced relaxation. The problem was that a large plot of land and coastline remained unused, yet uncolonized by developers, investors, and hotel chains. This had to be changed so that this part of the urban space would also fit with the catalog image of the largest Istrian city. Tourism was an obvious choice. But Puntizela and Štinjan are located on the outskirts of Pula; hence the question of Muzil raised much more discussion because of its localization in the city center.

The Muzil peninsula also belongs to post-military areas and, as part of the project, it was to become a space for tourism investments, especially elite tourism. However, while the decisions about the allocation of the remaining locations did not gather much emotion – Puntizela is located far from the center, on the peripheries, practically not part of Pula in the minds of the city residents – the Muzil investments encountered strong resistance and fierce debate. I will examine it precisely because it involved three categories of social actors important for the process of spatial planning and shaping of community values, who seek to impose their own worldview. I mean the local authorities, the national government, and the third sector, by which I mean both the more-or-less structured civic movement and official organizations. These are three types of actors with real driving power. If we consider how citizens – the residents of the city – can influence decision-making and city politics, these instances seem to be the most important. The central government may be less important in local zoning policy, but by regulating certain issues, supporting selected initiatives, and using long-term strategies, it has a significant, sometimes decisive, impact on the local situation.¹⁵

I do not account for “non-channeled” voices expressed on Internet forums or in surveys, because they are a random source of individual opinions. I will also not deal with the press unless it is about reporting on the Muzil dispute. I want to isolate causative attitudes, when statements and actions seek change and the goal of public activity is to actually impact the course of events. As we have already seen above, contemporary planning assumptions provide for the participation

¹⁴ During the controversy and debate around the future of Muzil, the peninsula was left without any systematic care. The civil initiative “Vol. im Pulu” proposed a solution implemented in other cases throughout Europe, of a temporary management of the area to prevent its deterioration. However, the initiative was rejected by the city council. Cf. <http://www.muzil-starter.org/> (acc. 23.04.2018).

¹⁵ As we saw, Brijuni Rivijera remains on the list of special investments and the state is a majority shareholder up to now.

of residents in the co-decision process on the spatial policy of the city. It is not only professionals, urban planners, and architects who are to create the urban landscape and, thus, influence the ways in which space or resources are used. It is not only local authorities, through their specialized offices, but also the local community that should influence the environment in which they live. Virtually all contemporary approaches emphasize this factor; it fundamentally contrasts with the trend of the earlier era of high modernism, when direct participation of non-specialists was unlikely. Today, at least in European countries, trust increased in the opinions of citizens who use the city on a daily basis and personally experience the consequences of decisions made by the city council.¹⁶

The Civic Movement “Volim Pulu”

From the very beginning, the lack of consultation with residents was raised as the most important objection to the project of changing the purpose of the post-military areas. As early as 2003, the first attempt was made to persuade the municipal authorities to hold a referendum on the matter. In 2009, Građanska inicijativa za Muzil “Volim Pulu” (“I Love Pula” Civic Initiative for Muzil) was established to “participate in the planning.”¹⁷ Activists from the group emphasized the lack of consultation with the residents and the exclusive agency of the *županija* (county), which ignored the voice and needs of the city and municipalities. After 2009, the Civic Initiative undertook a number of actions to inform the residents, present them with the consequences of the plans forced by the authorities, and show possible alternatives. Public debates, panel discussions, and open discussions were among activities that the Civic Initiative offered to the general public. This was necessary because the Brijuni Rivijera company did not conduct any information campaigns, while the first public debate – significantly limited by the city authorities through the introduction of a requirement to submit questions and comments in writing – was not organized until 2014. Since the decision process excluded the local authorities and residents from the question of changing the purpose of the post-military grounds, a grassroots initiative seemed to be the only way to involve citizens in spatial politics. As Kruno Kardov notes, this was all the more important given that Muzil occupies one-fifth of the city’s area; the city of Pula is the legal owner

¹⁶ Sustainable planning or sustainable development has become the key notion of urban planning. It strongly impacts the trends along with the idea of “sustainable tourism” or “ecotourism.” Cf. Sona Butula, “Planning for sustainable development: the significance of different social interests in landscape,” *Društvena istraživanja: časopis za opća društvena pitanja*, no. 65–66 (2003): 427–441, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/19494> (acc. 23.04.2018).

¹⁷ Cf. Kruno Kardov, op. cit., 128.

of some parts of the project site and, finally, “the issue of the change of Muzil’s application and the Pula harbor are key strategic questions for the future development of the city.”¹⁸

The activities of the civic movement in Pula assumed various forms. As agents involved in the public debate, its participants tried to gain audience and visibility, thus forcing the local government to consider their arguments. They used typical forms of persuasive practices, also aiming to make local residents aware of the different consequences of investing in tourism. In 2014, when all requests presented in the civic movement’s petition had been rejected by the city council, Dušica Radojčić, the leader of the civic opposition, enumerated the means which were to be used to continue their campaign: talking with people at standpoints situated on the streets and squares of Pula, publishing and free distribution of the paper *Otvoreni Muzil*, printing and distributing leaflets, negotiating with local leaders, and organizing mass meetings.¹⁹ All that time, two ideas retained importance in the civic movement: the need of informing the locals about the different aspects of touristification and the need for visibility in the public sphere. In its discourse and practice, we easily notice an opposition that divides the community into two groups: “they” who hold the power and the subordinated “we” who cannot partake in the political elite. The local government and politicians gather themselves behind closed doors, without any contact, or little contact with “ordinary people,” and make decisions without consulting the local community. Meanwhile, the activists of the civic movement are visible on the streets and squares, addressing their speeches or texts to the very same ordinary people so as to inform and integrate them into the decision-making process. In other words, the quarrel turned around the question of who has the right to decide what is useful for the city and which agents could play an important role in that process. Relations from the protest clearly show that mechanism.²⁰

Another strategy to oppose the city council’s forced privatization of Muzil was to reveal the negative aspects of touristification. The official project of “Brijuni Rivijera,” according to the council of Pula, was to strengthen the usefulness of the transformation of the demilitarized area into a tourist zone. The plan was proposed that the terrain that lies fallow for several years will now bring profit by transformation into a golf resort. Councilors stated that golf facilities would cover only 20% of the area, while the rest would be left as green space. Moreover, local dwellers would have the possibility to visit the area, walk around

¹⁸ Ibidem, 134.

¹⁹ Cf. <http://radio.hrt.hr/radio-pula/clanak/pulski-aktivisti-ne-odustaju-od-muzila/51859/> (acc. 19.09.2017).

²⁰ For the relation from the protest on 8.05.2014, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOQQtUADxg> (acc.10.08.2017). The protest happened at the main square of Pula, during the debate in the city council on the changes in the urban development plan.

and sightsee. The city council decided to expose the newly changed urbanistic plan to the audience at the end of 2013. During a turbulent debate in the Dom hrvatskih branitelja (Croatian Veterans House) those views were countered by an argumentative expose of a couple of activists. Their interventions were interrupted by officials, which eventually emptied the audience hall of participants. The reason was not only the lack of dialog but also the request of the council that every question related to the plan should have been proposed in writing, which would obviously eliminate any debate and relevant critique. We can clearly see how the organs of local power treated the community: not as a partner endowed with a real agency but a passive recipient of ideas and decisions made by politicians. Confronted with the question – Who has the right to debate the future of the city? – the councilors would probably say that the legally elected power and specialists but not citizens’ formalized and informal representations, NGOs, or “the street.”²¹

The Civic Initiative “Volim Pulu” underlined on many occasions the negative effects of tourist investment for the urban community. The most fateful solution envisaged by the future tender assumed that the large part of Muzil would be given in perpetual usufruct to a private investor. In that way, the city council and the community of Pula would lose control over it, having only the possibility to revise the conditions of a contract. After years of military’s domination over the area, it would now be controlled again by an agent external to the community, whose interests would probably collide with the needs of this agent. As Radojčić emphasized, on the one hand, there would be an investor aiming to increase its gain, while on the other hand, the city residents for whom the sustainable politics seems more important than other values.²²

Another argument advanced by protestors was about the “usefulness” of such investment. First, the local budget and the county Istarska would have to prepare the terrain for the needs of an investor. Second, a big tourist resort should be properly communicated with a highway leading to Pula and the airport. It would mean further investments in roads, airport facilities, and a reorganization of the transport network in the south of Pula. Third, the experience of different tourist resorts around the world shows that only a tenth part of the gain remains for the local community, while the rest is usually transferred abroad. Fourth, an argument the most frequently forwarded by the “Brijuni Rivijera” supporters predict the creation of jobs, which would obviously contribute to resolving

²¹ Cf. the press conference of “Vol. im Pulu” from 3.11.2013 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEg-uKPiVDs>), and the turbulent debate in Don hrvatskih branitelja from 13.11.2013 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q604bDd2e1Q>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqCAanKg_9A (acc. 24.04.2018).

²² Cf. interview by Dušica Radojčić on the Croatian television from 8.05.2014: <https://thvid.net/video/muzil-emisija-turisti%C4%8Dka-klasa-hrt-08-05-2014-jdt2PO-ppMM.html> (acc. 24.04.2018).

one of the main problems in Croatia. However, jobs created for the purpose of a resort mostly involve unskilled labor force and services, often offering temporary and unstable living conditions for workers, which in the long-term perspective do not resolve the problem of unemployment. We could rightfully ask “Who would gain from such an investment?” and “What the local community would really gain from the transformation of one-fifth of its territory into a resort for rich people?”

The last aspect of the controversy around Muzil concerns the type of tourist profile planned for this area not only by the local urban plan but also by the county’s strategy of development, reflected in the abovementioned law on special zones of touristic investment. Golf tourism is sometimes presented as an important factor of development for the local community as a diversification of its offer. It could also extend the touristic season, offering other types of activity than the sea and the sun.²³ The influx of tourists “with better purchasing power” would lead to an improvement of the quality of services offered in the resort.

But the same study states that “Istrian tourist enterprises, because of priorities such as raising the quality of their accommodation capacities and general indebtedness, do not have the necessary capital to invest in Istrian golf. Therefore, the investors will be foreign physical and legal persons.”²⁴ How Istria would benefit from the golf-tourism? Mostly by “improving the image of Istrian tourism,” “attracting tourists with better purchasing power,” and “increasing foreign investments.” The author of another study estimates that golf courses do attract tourists while new hotels are built along with other facilities.²⁵ However, these are only estimations that may not come true, as shows not only reports cited by Radojčić and other contributors to *Glas Muzila* but also other research on tourist market. Branding Istria on the international tourist market still avoids the question “How real residents would profit from it?”

Here, the symbolic connotation of golf helps to better understand the vigorous opposition to the project of the development of Muzil. Golf still appears as a sport of the rich, who manifest their status creating elite clubs. Both above studies argue that it is time to change this stereotype, that golf has become a popular sport, but on the other hand, they qualify golf players as “tourists with better purchasing power” or “people whose financial capacities are well above the average;” in other words: the rich. There not only appears a gap is between

²³ Cf. Alen Jugović, Jasmina Gržinić, Slavko Lončar, “Makroekonomic legitimacy of investment in the development of golf tourism in Istria,” *Economic research – Ekonomska istraživanja*, no. 2 (2009): 66–85, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/38212> (acc. 10.05.2018).

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 70.

²⁵ Cf. Saša Petar, “The development of tourism through the construction of golf courses,” *Acta turistica nova*, no. 1 (2010): 55–80, <https://hrcak.srce.hr/61476> (acc. 10.05.2018).

richer tourists from abroad, who would profit from the Muzil resort, and ordinary residents of the city, who could not afford that kind of activity. Pula is also a city of long socialist tradition that dates back to the times of the First World War. Thus, the inhabitants view a golf resort on the peninsula in the city center as an act of neocolonialism that transforms Croatia into a country of cheap labor force and natural resources for the benefit of investors.

The conflict around Muzil and its future received broad commentary in Croatian television, various journals, and abroad. The activity of non-government associations interested activists from all around Europe, especially the long-term plan of informing and involving the local population of Pula. Dušica Radojčić, one of the most engaged activists, told me in private correspondence about her fatigue from such interest. But on the other hand, the example of Pula seems really important for other localities in Croatia like Split or, especially, Dubrovnik. A similar project was forced by investors and the city council in Dubrovnik, that is, the creation of golf courses on the top of Srdj, a hill dominating the city with a splendid view over Dubrovnik and the Adriatic. Dubrovnik transforms into a ghost town with no permanent residents and thousands of tourists flooding in every day. It brings us back to the problem of the urban space and agents who can, and should, participate in it. As we see on the example of Pula (Dubrovnik would be an even more explicit example), touristification excludes large parts of space from everyday use. These parts become inaccessible like Muzil. The urban space in European tradition is represented by the image of the agora, an open space accessible for all, a space of contact and exchange. Meanwhile, Muzil as a golf resort will be an exact opposition of the agora, a place for the few, with a strong potentiality of instituting hierarchies and dividing people on the economic – and most probably national – basis.

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