

## CROATIAN ISLANDS - MAIN GEOGRAPHICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

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UDC: 911.3: 37(497.5 Zadar)  
Izvorni znanstveni članak  
*Original scientific paper*

Primljeno: 1995-10-17

Received

The paper takes into consideration the basis of the contemporary knowledge of the Croatian islands. The author has presented the essential features of geographical and geopolitical space and the characteristics of evaluating the insular position. The characteristics of traffic system, the relation between the continental state and insular autonomy, cultural and linguistic peculiarities, territorial sea and maritime borders, supply and help policy and environment problems have been pointed out. Special attention has been paid to geopolitical significance of these islands in the Adriatic.

**Key words:** Croatian islands, insularity

Članak razmatra osnovu suvremenih saznanja o hrvatskim otocima. Prikazane su bitne crte geografskog i geopolitičkog prostora te značajne procjene otočkog položaja. Posebno se razrađuju: obilježja prometnog sustava, odnos između kopnene države i otočne autonomije, kulturne i jezične osobitosti, te granice teritorijalnog mora i morske državne granice. Posvećena je pažnja politici opskrbe i pružanja pomoći kao i problemima okoliša. Posebno mjesto zauzima analiza geopolitičkog značaja ovih otoka u Jadranu.

**Ključne riječi:** hrvatski otoci, otočni položaj

### Basic spatial and geographical features

The Croatian islands are situated in a range of some 450 km along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. They make the main part of Adriatic islands. Besides 718 islands and islets there are 389 cliffs and 78 reefs. The total area covers 3300 km<sup>2</sup> (about 5,8 % of Croatian mainland territory) and the length of their coast is 4.057,2 km. Twenty of these islands occupy an area larger than 20 km<sup>2</sup> each, and other 57 ones have the surface from 1 km<sup>2</sup> to 20 km<sup>2</sup> (Zemljopisni atlas Republike Hrvatske, p. 64).

The biggest islands are Krk (409,9 km<sup>2</sup>), Cres (404,3 km<sup>2</sup>), Brač (394,6 km<sup>2</sup>), Hvar (299,7 km<sup>2</sup>), Pag (284,6 km<sup>2</sup>), and Korčula (276,0 km<sup>2</sup>). The most populated in 1991 were: Korčula (17.038 inhabitants), Krk (16.402), Brač (13.824), Hvar (11.495), Rab (9.025) and Lošinj (8.134) (ZARH, p. 64, 80).

The populousness dates from the old ages of human existence, with its fragments, relics and monuments existing from the Stone Age to the present time. Some of the islands were recorded during the Greek and then Roman administration. Their Liburnian and Illyrian basis have left traces in numerous prehistoric and historical remains. Sixty-seven islands are inhabited and 17 just periodically.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were 118 thousand inhabitants on these islands (I. Lajić, 1994., p. 27).<sup>1</sup> Till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., during the Austro-Hungarian rule, the increase of the number of inhabitants was very rapid, so that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. there were 303 settlements with 176

thousand inhabitants (ZARH, p. 80).<sup>2</sup> The period of the monarchic and later communist Yugoslavia was characterised by the decrease of population as, after all, it was the case in many other parts of Croatia. It was due mostly to the strong emigrating waves, so that in 1981 these islands counted only 116 thousand inhabitants (ZARH, p. 80). The increase was renewed lately, so that in 1991 there were 128 thousand inhabitants which made only 2,6 % of the population in the country (ZARH, p.80). This increase should be taken with reserve, being the reflection of a more precise temporarily absent population census.

inhabitants  
stanovništvo  
000

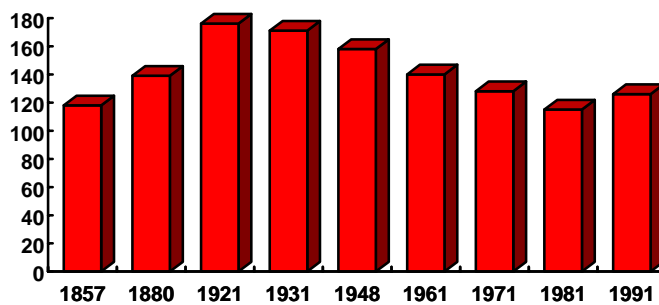


Fig. 1 Number of Croatian island population in census years 1857 - 1991  
*Sl. 1 Broj stanovnika hrvatskih otoka u popisnim godinama 1857.-1991.*

The biggest insular settlement is Mali Lošinj (6.566 inh. in 1991) on the northern island of Lošinj. It is followed by Vela Luka (4.464 inh.), Blato (4.093) and Korčula (3.232 inh.), all situated on the south standing Korčula (ZARH, p. 74-76). Among 303 settlements there has been 35 urban ones and 268 villages. The islands are inhabited almost exclusively by Croatian population.

The recent demographic data show that this area is characterised by a very bad age structure (more than 12% old persons with age 60 or more, less than 30% young persons up to age 19). As well, almost 10% of inhabitants have been temporarily absent, staying and working in foreign countries (Statistički ljetopis 1993, p. 482-491).

A paper that deals with demographic features of the Croatian islands in last 30 years, includes analysis of total population and its natural and mechanic dynamics. The analyses show that the most frequent direction of population dynamics is depopulation caused by negative net migration, low natality and high mortality. However, the observed period reveals demographic polarisation. There is continuous depopulation in villages and settlements in the island interior in one hand, and upward sloping population tendencies in urban settlements (I. Lajić, 1994.).

Concerning the geomorphology, these islands were formed mainly after the last glaciation in Pleistocene. At the time the lower zones, which separate them from each other as well as from mainland, were swallowed by the sea.

Geologically it is the matter of the elevation of folds whose crests extend along the coast in so called "Dinaric" direction. These forms of relief are known as "Dalmatian" type of sea coast. Their highs do not surmount 778 metres (which is the high of Vidova Gora on the island Brač - the highest island of all).

The climate is typically Mediterranean although not quite the same on all the islands, being arider and warmer on the southern islands and cooler on the northern ones, the latter showing also submediterranean characteristics. The lowest temperatures in January are in average 6-8°C, and the highest in July between 23°C and 26°C, rising up from NW towards SE. Also, the quantity of rains slowly increases from SE islands (750-800 mm) towards NW islands (1000-1200 mm in a year) (T. Šegota, 1988. p. 465-467).

Waters of the archipelago are poorly marked. Surface waters are rare especially running waters. Among fresh-water lakes Vransko Jezero (Vrana Lake) on the island of Cres distinguishes itself by its size and its significance. There are some salt-water lakes too (e.g. Dugi Otok, Mljet). The dominant subterranean karst hydrology has formed numerous and attractive speleological objects. The appearance of submarine and surface sources, wells, siphons and similar are also connected with it.

Soil is present only in karstic morphological forms of a field type ("polje") and dry valleys in karst rarely covering larger areas of an island (Susak, Unije). The predominant kind of soils is *terra rossa*. Some small areas are covered also by brown or sandy soils. It is the basis of specific insular agriculture. The most notable cultivation is that of olives, vine, vegetables, cereals, figs, *marasca* cherry, almond and others.

The living world is in proportion with the karstic basis of the soil and with Mediterranean climate. Phytogeographic characteristics are determined by Mediterranean sorts (holm oak communities), which generally present in degraded forms (maquis etc.) as the result of being over exploited for centuries. Animal world is considerably poorer than on the neighbouring land. Owing to the poor karstic basis with rocky pasture grounds only small cattle is bred, especially sheep.

These islands do not form a separate province or county geopolitically. Administratively they make parts of seven counties (provinces here called "županija") whose centres are on the continent. The most of islands gravitate to land centres such as Rijeka, Split, Zadar, Dubrovnik and Šibenik, which are in the same time seaboard county centres.

Larger islands are ecclesiastically independent. Catholic bishops reside in Krk (bishop's diocese of Krk includes larger northern islands such as Rab, Krk, Lošinj, Cres, a part of Pag and smaller neighbouring ones), and in Hvar (for the southern islands: Hvar, Brač, Vis, Šolta and neighbouring islets). Formerly, the bishops resided also at Osor (for Cres and Lošinj) in Rab and in Korčula, which evidently points out the importance of these islands from the Middle-Ages till the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The analysis of Croatian islands, according to the basic insularity indicators offers a series of theses, which show that nowadays these islands are far from exploiting all the possibilities of development. It has been caused by certain

restricting factors, the most important of them being economic connection with communist system in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of the islands as shelters for people refuging from insecure continent, unresolved problems of water supplying, traffic and infrastructure as well as their spatial disintegration.

### **How do Croatian islands evaluate their insularity- the fact that they are completely surrounded by sea?**

The evaluation of insularity can be directly observed through economic situation and structure. Some of the islands have been developing an important tourist activity since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and some of them only recently (Rab, Lošinj, Hvar, Krk, Pag, Brač, Korčula, Murter, Ugljan, Cres, Lopud). The other have realised the first steps in the development of tourism (Dug Toak, Mallet, Volta, Vies, Lipan, Colonel, Iž). This activity has for sure granted to mitigate and to stop decreasing of the population number. Especially, the last decades have been characterised by a developing increase of nautical tourism. Some of well-organised marinas and tourist ports surely are the leading points of nautical routes along the Adriatic coast, including these virgin islands. The most important ones are Punat (island Krk), Žut (Kornati), Hramina (Murter), etc. In 1989 Croatian islands were visited by 1,6 million tourists, who made 14,5 million of tourist nights (9 nights pro person in average). There were 39,5 thousand beds in hotels, 63,1 in camps, 94,6 in private accommodation, etc. The war almost stopped tourist activity, which recently shows again some revitalisation trends (V. Mikačić, 1994. p. 520,521).

The industry is characteristic only for better inhabited islands. It deals with shipbuilding and boat repairing (Lošinj, Korčula, Ugljan), manufacturing industry (Korčula, Krk, Brač) and tin fish production (Dugi Otok, Vis, Brač, Korčula). The agriculture has remained only in the most favourable zones and in the more inhabited places, but the greatest part of the agricultural areas was abandoned after the World War II. Only olive growing distinguishes itself, while viticulture (Korčula, Hvar) sheep breeding (Pag) vegetable growing (Ugljan) and other branches have been kept sporadically. Fishing has been connected with fish manufacturing factories on the islands (Dugi otok, Ugljan, Vis, Brač, Korčula, Cres and others) or on the continent. Mariculture is well developed on the Zadar archipelago (Ugljan, Pašman, etc.).

Croatian archipelago is the integral part of the state. So we cannot talk about special zones such as "paradis fiscal", "commerce hors taxes" and similar. Another reason: the young state could not, under the war circumstances, render possible such conditions on the islands. Only some traffic privileges have been introduced for islanders. Connected with it, banking and business activities are slack on these islands. Attractive and less populated parts of Croatian islands try to affirm the advantages of preserved natural phenomena. National parks on dispersed archipelago of Kornati near Zadar, on the island Mljet (NW part of the island, on Brioni in front of the Istrian part of Croatia (once Tito's presidential residence, nowadays opened to visitors), and Nature park "Telaščica" on the Dugi Otok, are the most visited ones. These protected areas give also opportunity for certain forms of valuation of islands and retaining of population.

Although islands make a small part of Croatian national economy, owing to the introduction of market economy, some progress has been made in recent years. In 1989, there were 181 Croatian enterprises, that is 3,1% and in 1991 there were 398 or 2,4% (Croatia 5.873 and 16.504) (V. Šonje, 1994.). A relative decrease of insular share was noted in 1991.

Some of the economists prove that Croatian island manufacturing enterprises prove to be more efficient than continental ones, because islands have not had resources to sustain great industrial companies, which turned out to be the greatest loss makers in the Croatian economy. On the other hand, non-differentiated, mass supply of tourist services reached its peak in pre war-times. This fact is reflected through lower efficiency of larger tourist enterprises (V. Šonje, 1994.).

### **What are the traffic challenges like?**

Traffic connections are very important for the life and development of islands. There are still small islands whose needs for better traffic connections have not been satisfied yet. On the other hand some islands, especially bigger ones and those nearer to the continent have been solving their traffic problems conveniently. So modern air connection has resulted recently in building new airports on the islands Krk, Lošinj, Hvar and Brač.

Bridge connections have practically transformed some islands into bigger or smaller peninsulas (Krk, Pag, Vir, čiovo, Murter) or connect them reciprocally (Cres-Lošinj, Ugljan-Pašman). Although the motor vehicles pay a tax for passing over the bridge land - island Krk, which is the biggest one in Croatia and only one with that obligation, the traffic caused also by industrial potentials (chemical industry DINA) is very frequent.

Maritime links are much more directed towards regional centres on the continental coast (Split, Zadar, Rijeka, Dubrovnik, Šibenik) and to the lines of the shortest ferryboat connections with the continent. Croatian alongside coast ferryboat and passenger's line, which connects Rijeka, Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik, and which, in summer, continues also towards Albania and Corfu, touches only a few islands. These are Rab, Hvar, Korčula and Mljet. During tourist season some islands have steady direct hydrofoil and other tourist lines with Croatian and Italian coasts (Lošinj, Dugi otok, Hvar, etc.).

Some islands have founded their own, independent maritime traffic companies (Rab, Korčula, Lošinj, and Vrgada). In 1990 the traffic they realised made 15,4% of such income of Croatia (V. Šonje, 1994.). There are 29 ferry lines that transported 1, 4 million vehicles and several million of passengers (V. Šonje, 1994.). The public roads cover 1246 km on 23 islands (1145 km of modern roads). The length of mayor roads makes 121 km, of regional roads 590 km and local ones 535 km. The total length is about 1500 km (I. Legac, D. Mlinarić, 1994.).

**Problems and expenses connected with the insular position.**

Primarily there are difficulties with regard to traffic connections and solving infrastructure problems. Passenger transport is expensive for the islanders and, owing to the lack of lines some small islands have been completely depopulated (Biševo, Škarda, Šćedro, Srakane Vele and Srakane Male). It is very difficult and very expensive to build water and electricity supply systems on the islands. All inhabited islands have got electric power, but only a few bigger ones have solved water supplying in a modern way. These are Lošinj, Cres, Krk, Rab, Pag, Korčula, Hvar, Brač and some others (Murter, Čiovo, etc) nearer to the land coast.

Problems of sewerage are becoming more and more evident on the islands. There are serious difficulties in education and in health protection especially on small islands. High schools exist only on bigger islands as well as medical institutions. However, in urgent cases immediate interventions are provided for. Police and army fast motorboats and even helicopters are to disposal. Some of these problems, that strike islanders, do harm to visitors too. Tourists also are faced with problems of insular position (supply of food that is sometimes shorter, slow traffic, limited supply of water or distance from the nearest doctor, etc.).

Nevertheless, a certain number of tourists, although being conscious of such limitations, are desirous of taking rest and staying in circumstances far from those of modern life in urban agglomerations.

**Continental state and insular autonomy**

Croatian islands are not an independent province or even county. They are autonomous only at the lowest degree of local self-government. By the new administrative territorial organisation of Croatia in 1993, series of small administrative territorial communes was established (37 altogether) (Statistički ljetopis 1993, p. 482-491). Bigger and more populated islands have got several communes (Brač 7, Krk 6 and a town commune, Hvar 3 and a town commune, Korčula 3 and a town commune, Pag 2, Ugljan 2, Vis 1 and a town commune). Smaller and less inhabited islands make often a commune together with neighbouring islands (Dugi otok, Šolta, Mljet, Lastovo, Rab, Lošinj, Cres, Pašman, Vir). Smaller islands generally belong to the commune of the bigger neighbouring island or even to the commune whose centre is on the continent (Šibenik archipelago, a part of Zadar archipelago, Dubrovnik one, and similar).

When Croatia became an independent and sovereign state, many islands got their own commune (earlier there were only 9 till 1993), which stimulated positive processes of selforganizing and solving local questions.

### **Cultural and linguistic characteristics**

Islands in Croatia have preserved and promoted special forms and variants of the Croatian language as the population has been Croatian since the early Middle Ages. What characterises them are an archaic pronunciation and a vocabulary that are pretty similar to the language that was spoken in Croatian regions till the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Fugitive waves from the turbulent neighbouring continent reflected themselves in a smaller number of Turkish, Hungarian and Roman idioms (the latter ones are remains from antiquity or are the result of later connections with Venice). Each island is peculiar by its pronunciation, which may be more or less under the influence of neighbouring land. The same happens with cultural inheritance. These islands are the treasury of Croatian monuments especially sacral ones (churches, monasteries, etc.) dating from the period of the old Croatian state from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Older monuments are mostly the remains of the prehistoric and antique cultures specially from the Roman rule in Illyric provinces (Dalmatia – south-eastern part and Liburnia – north-western part). Many customs from ecclesiastical and secular life have been preserved to this day. By the renewed independence of the Croatian state they gain in importance and become more intense. Publishing activity in local dialects also augments, which is not repressed by the central state government, on the contrary, it supports it, for the strong national consciousness of insular residents has been exceptionally developed. As there is no particular language on the islands here has been no need so far for introducing bilingual practice, not even on northern situated island of Lošinj on which there were some italianized Croatians and immigrated Italians who mostly abdicated after the World War II. Their possible return into free Croatia would not lead to a significant change, as they would make under 5% population in a commune and would enjoy all the rights of a national minority granted by the Constitution of Croatia.

Roman Catholic Church has played an important part in preserving cultural and traditional values on these islands as well as in the whole Croatia, especially the old right of Croatians to use their original Glagolic alphabet and the Croatian language in liturgy, which was an exception in the Latin Church. There are bishop's centres on two islands (Krk and Hvar) for bigger islands in northern and middle insular groups. The other islands are connected with the archdioceses in Split and Zadar.

### **Territorial sea and maritime border - Geopolitical aspects**

Croatian islands play an important part in determining maritime borders of Croatia, especially between Croatia and neighbouring Italy. The distance between some Croatian islets (Palagruža, Jabuka), and continental coast has conditioned considerable width of the belonging coastal sea and inner sea waters are also considerable with regard to their area.

The border of the Italian and Croatian epicontinental sea has been settled by convention. Considering nowadays superficies of the Adriatic Sea, the convention of Montego Bay (1982), has no special importance here. In the period

of ex Yugoslavia, some of the islands, owing to their strategic position, were subjected to strong restrictions connected with the possibilities of developing tourism and receiving foreigners. So, as the islands Vis and Lastovo were strong military and naval bases, foreigners were not admitted, as well as on Brioni islands where president Tito's residence took place. The new state of Croatia is also interested in valorising these islands with regard to their strategic importance, but so far such strong restrictions have not been introduced. On the contrary, earlier restrictions, which were hindering their progress, have been abolished. There are smaller military bases on some other islands, which have got typically defensive character.

For centuries Croatian islands have been a significant survey of what has been happening on the Croatian land as well as on the larger areas of SE Europe, especially on the Balkans. They were often the refuge for war exiles and refugees from the continent. The biggest migration waves took place from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, during Ottoman conquests in Bosnia, Croatia and Hungary, just at the time of the strongest decrease of Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, helped by previous fall of the Bosnian kingdom. The larger part of the Croatian kingdom was conquered by Turkey (the inland part) and by Venice (a great deal of littoral region with islands). So the kingdom of Croatia abiding then in its smaller part as so called "reliquiae reliquiarum", or "antemurale christianitatum" mutilated entered the Empire of Austria, and later Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In spite of foreign rule and immigration from the continent, Croatian islands have preserved the Croatian language, tradition and culture for centuries, which can be explained by their expressed isolation, in spite of being quite near the coast. Also, the strong influence of the West, coming from Croatian Adriatic towns as well as from the Apennine peninsula, cannot be denied. The present wars in Croatia and Bosnia (1991-1995), which are characterised by an incredible banishment of Croats, Bosnians and other non-Serbs in order to create so called "Great Serbia", have had effects on islands too. A large number of emigrants found exile on the Croatian islands in 1991/92, where they have found accommodation mainly in tourist resorts (Brač, Hvar, Ugljan, Lošinj, Krk, Korčula, etc.). Besides that, many families from the attacked Adriatic towns (Zadar, Dubrovnik, Šibenik, Biograd) sheltered children and the old on the islands. These were mostly families descending from one of these islands or those who own weekend houses there or friends who offered them hospitality.

This sudden immigration brought problems to the islands but, in the same time, it enabled here and there, especially on small depopulated islands the revitalisation of education, trade and sanitary service. Some schools, which had been closed for several years, reopened and the school's teaching staffs were to be reinforced in most of them. For a short period the insular traffic was blockaded by JNA (Yugoslav National Army) fleet before this one withdrew to their bases on the islands of Vis and Lastovo, and after that towards Boka Kotorska Bay, being completely usurped by Serbia and Montenegro. Geostrategic importance of the Croatian islands in solving crises in the territories of Bosnia&Herzegovina and Croatia has been increasing more and more. It can be proved by the presence of the foreign forces' fleet in the Adriatic, although they mostly rely on their own arsenals (aircraft carriers and similar).



It should be mentioned here that the large number of islands and their variety enable the resistance to aggressive forces. It proved to be effective in fighting against the Turkish fleet, in partisan tactics during World War Two and in the newest war happenings at the end of 1991, when the large and numerous fleet arrogated by Serbs had no chance to withstand the resistance that was offered individually by the local inhabitants in their small boats.

### **The supply policy in the insular area**

Some small islands did not resist the periods of bad supplying and the lack of connections with bigger islands or with mainland. Nowadays they are not inhabited but for a few old people living in isolation and loneliness (Biševo, Srakane Vele, Srakane Male, Šćedro, Sv. Andrija, Škarda). However most of the islands possessed larger limit of endurance, which enabled them to get over the most difficult periods and retain the minimum of vitality. Especially, bigger islands are today well supplied with many important and everyday's needs.

### **Help policy**

Croatian islands cannot unhappily rely upon larger EU benefits as Croatia has not been yet its member. Croatia itself tries to improve the situation on the islands with several programmes on the national level. The Centre for Insular Development has been founded. It disposes certain resources for the current programmes of development. However the heaviest burden comes upon the local authorities of each insular commune. Some tax privileges have been considered for a longer time, but they have not been applied yet, at least not in perceptible dimensions.

Croatia is the member of Alpe-Adria regional union. This one has considered some ideas about helping Adriatic islands, which resulted in some investigating activities on the bigger islands (airports and similar).

### **How do islanders feel about insular isolation?**

The syndrome of isolation and that of being surrounded by sea, depends on various factors. The smaller the number of inhabitants is, the weaker traffic and other infrastructure connections are, as well as the larger distance from the continent, the stronger these syndromes are. The general nearness of the continental coast does not result here with an extreme feeling of being cut of the coast and abandoned, as it can be a case in point on distant oceanic islands.

Some small islands (like Susak, Sestrunj and others) can be used as samples for studying situations, which form special mental complexes and reactions, physiognomic types, behaviour, etc. It is interesting that till recently, because of the lack of insular roads, settlements on some islands were very isolated among each other, so that they were better connected with the centre on the continent than with a settlement on the same island (Dugi Otok, Pašman,

Ugljan, and Mljet). Centenary exposedness to robberies by pirates, plunderers and predators maybe resulted in a certain innate caution against strangers, but also in an open-hearted hospitality to a friend or an acquaintance.

### **Environmental problems on the islands**

Till the beginning of the brutal Serbian aggression in 1991, Croatian islands used their potentials in tourism and other above mentioned branches. The situation is going better after the centre of war actions has been moved from the Croatian coast towards Bosnia in 1995. It was possible primarily because these islands have preserved relatively high level of environmental quality. Pure blue sea, countless quiet coves, autochthonous vegetation, inconsiderable use of chemicals in Mediterranean agriculture, small number of inhabitants, are qualities that characterise Croatian islands nowadays too. Especially nautical tourism shows a great interest for these qualities and is supported by a high degree of resistance and continuous development. But it does not mean that there are no problems. At the moment there is no concept of solving the way of carrying away waste material (from the islands). So each island solves this problem individually, primarily basing it on the autopurificative potentials of the sea, then burning it or, which is less usual, removing it to a waste deposit on the land. There are special difficulties in solving this problem on small, distant islands. Besides the garbage produced by population, there is another kind of pollution. The shores of islands, especially those which face the open Adriatic, are often attacked by the waste material thrown away from the ships that reach or leave Adriatic ports. In this way many attractive coves suffer damage.

Here and there the coasts of Croatian islands are spoiled by inadequate ways of building, especially weekend houses. However, considering the length of coasts, it can be stated that such kind of building could not spoil the beauty of shores.

### **The feeling of depending on the continent and centre-outskirt relationship.**

The nearness of the mainland and other mentioned characteristics especially their longitudinal extensiveness, as we have seen from the previous discussion, make Croatian islands depend on the continent. Daily the ports on the mainland supply the islands with different goods and stuff, and the main decision centres are not situated on the islands at all. That is why the “depending existence”, stimulated by bad demographic features (the high old age index, the lack of young population under 20, etc.), has been developing.

The deficiency of reproductive population, often creates the circumstances that result in hopelessness and disbelief in future. Only the first steps have been made in improving the situation. One of the Croatian sociologists sees the solution in “attributing the islands their lost identity of one of the Croatian developing centres” (I. Rogić, 1994.).

The expected success of the capital and larger regional centres in realising a development on the islands too, might be enabled only by applying the

dispersed development concept. This one, because of well-known circumstances in Croatia, has not been seriously applied yet.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> the data is for census year 1857.

<sup>2</sup> the data is for census year 1910.

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#### SOMMAIRE

Damir Magaš: Les Iles Croates - Traits Essentiels Géographique et Géopolitique

L'article est une base synoptique de la connaissance contemporaine des îles croates. L'auteur a présenté les traits essentiels de l'espace géographique et géopolitique et puis les traits caractéristiques de valorisation de la situation insulaire. Il a souligné les caractéristiques du système de trafic, la relation entre l'état continental et l'autonomie insulaire, des particularités culturelles et linguistiques, la mer territoriale et les frontières maritimes, la politique d'approvisionnement et d'assistance et les problèmes de l'environnement. L'importance géographique et géopolitique de ces îles dans l'Adriatique a été particulièrement soulignée.

## **SAŽETAK**

### **Damir Magaš: Hrvatski otoci - glavne geografske i geopolitičke značajke**

članak razmatra osnove suvremene znanstvene spoznaje o hrvatskim otocima. Autor obrađuje najbitnije pokazatelje geografskog i geopolitičkog prostora ovih otoka i značajke današnjeg vrednovanja otočnog položaja. Istaknuti su glavna obilježja prometnog sustava, odnos matične zemlje i otočne samouprave, kulturne i lingvističke specifičnosti, značenje teritorijalnog mora i morskih granica, opskrbe i dotacija te odnos prema zaštiti okoliša i objekata prirode. Posebno je istaknuto geopolitičko značenje ovih otoka za Hrvatsku.