

I see good Postira: benefits and threats to the island community on Brač

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Many settlements on the Croatian coast, especially the smaller ones, have developed in recent decades mainly due to the tourism industry, which brings numerous advantages, but also disadvantages. However, this does not have to be the case and is not always the case. To show an example of a different, balanced development, the municipality of Postira was chosen, which has a long tradition of diversified economy based on its development in three branches - agriculture (olive growing), industry (Sardina fish factory) and the omnipresent tourism. The aim of the research is to identify benefits and developmental threats through the analysis of the attitudes and opinions of the local population and stakeholders. The research results were obtained through semi-structured interviews, with questions divided into six sections derived from contextualizing the concept of insularity in the specificities of the Croatian islands: lifestyle, transportation, projects, economy and youth and future. Although the research confirmed the existence of a diversified and resilient economy that provides the inhabitants of Postira with a high level of employment opportunities as well as a high level of quality of life, problems such as the lack of leisure activities and the threat to the balance of the existing economic structure due to the new hotel and the increase in private accommodation units were also identified. This paper deals with the current living situation in the municipal settlements of Postira and Dol, and

also points out the dangers and opportunities that the population is yet to encounter, and presents its predominantly optimistic view of the future.

Keywords: islandness, development perspectives, diversified economy, interview, island of Brač, Dalmatia, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Croatian islands are recognised as a valuable tourist area in the territory of the Republic of Croatia. This is, for example, seen in the visual depiction of the Croatian National Tourist Board (2023) that often uses views of islands views to promote Croatia around the world. However, the islands are not only the lovely towns and villages depicted in photographs, but are also places of residence kept active and ‘alive’ by their residents. However, this is often overlooked in the public discourse concerning islands, not only in Croatia but generally in the western culture (Su et al., 2022). The development of numerous settlements on the Croatian coast, especially the smaller ones, has been guided primarily by the tourism economy over the past few decades. This brings numerous advantages, but also disadvantages. There are many similar examples abroad, so there is an increasing discussion about the need for a critical review of the positive and negative aspects of tourism in the development of islands. Pappas and Tsartas (2009) conducted a survey on the Greek island of Rodos, and found that tourism development is suitable for economic development and the general standard of living, though there are visible, negative aspects on the environment and society, and as such tourism development policies require further modification. Research on sustainability through the specialisation of tourism activities analysing the positive and negative elements of tourism outside the European context was performed by Towner and Milne (2017) on the example of the island Mentawai in Indonesia. They conducted interviews and found differences in the perceptions of the local population concerning negative aspects, where the local population not engaged in tourism activities felt that the local culture was insufficiently respected, while most of the population engaged in tourism did not highlight any negative consequences. Both groups agree that positive aspects include good sources of revenue and employment. In the sense of positive solutions to even out the positive and negative aspects of tourism development, Lim and Cooper (2009) found that the processes of optimisation and specialisation can lead to positive results, although that requires more work on measurement methods and overseeing the development.

In addition to the dominance of tourism, a number of other island topics have been recognized in domestic research, which reveal the specificities of the Croatian archipelago and place tourism within a broader developmental context.

Relevant research includes studies by Starc (1992), Šimunović (1994) and Rogić (1994). These authors highlighted the development issues, such as negative demographics, physical isolation and distance, and inadequate policies at all government levels, among others, which are also encompassed in this study. However, it is questionable whether their recommendations were ever implemented on the Croatian islands. Since Croatian independence, the Croatian geographic literature has included numerous works by Zadar geographers Magaš (1996; 2000; 2016), Faričić (2003, 2012), Čuka (2006), Magaš and Faričić (1999; 2000; 2002; 2006), Faričić and Magaš (2004), Magaš et al. (1999; 2001; 2003; 2005; 2006) and Faričić et al. (2010; 2020). There is also a number of case studies, such as the one by Katinić Nižić et al. (2009), who considered spatial planning as a function of stability on the island Krk, where the key goal was to improve the quality of life through implementation of the Ecological-Economic Destination programme. Papers on demographic topics include those by Lajić (1995; 1997; 2006), Nejašmić (1992; 1998; 1999), Nejašmić and Mišetić (2006), and Lajić & Mišetić (2013), tourism topics were covered by Šulc (2012; 2014), while Opačić (2002a; 2002b; 2008; 2009) addressed a number of island issues. Some studies offered a valuable insight into the process on small Croatian islands, particularly demographic ageing, emigration, transport difficulties, the resilience of the island identity, and the return of weekend residents among the population that moved away previously and who show an awareness of the value of the space for islanders. Examples are devoted to the Šibenik archipelago (Podgorelec & Klempić Bogadi, 2013), Zlarin (Klempić Bogadi & Podgorelec, 2011), Žirje (Faričić & Magaš, 2004) and Ist (Čuka & Magaš, 2003).

In the scientific literature, the island of Brač was studied by Jutronić (1949; 1956), Fabjanović (1991), and Kuvedžić (1999), though it is important to mention a series of collections of works on Brač with a total of 24 books published since 1940 (most recently in 2018), where the island of Brač is viewed through a range of topics. The spatial area of the municipality of Postira was the subject of previous expert and scientific papers. One of these was a case study presented by Tonković i Zlatar Gamberožić (2014), based on an interview method and which showed how Postira is successfully handling the usual problems of the Croatian coastal area, such as excessive coastal construction, environmental pollution, excessive focus on tourism activities, and the like, and that this municipality has had an impressive level of success in implementing sustainable development principles. The authors confirmed this approach in a comparative case

study with additional interviews in several settlements on the island of Brač, where Postira proved to be a positive example of accepting the paradigm of sustainable tourism by the local community and local government (Zlatar Gamberožić & Tonković, 2015). It is evident that in reviewing the literature to date, the positive sides of development in the municipality of Postira are often highlighted. This may be, though is not necessarily, a sign of positive trends in spatial management, though further analysis is required to confirm this.

Such findings prompted the conducted research, the purpose of which was to contribute to the existing knowledge about Postira. The municipality of Postira was selected for the purpose of this study, due to its long tradition of economic diversification and strong differentiation away from the typical image of an island settlement that is economically dependent on mass tourism (Tonković & Zlatar Gamberožić, 2014). Instead of focusing on a specific topic, such as demographic conditions or dependence on tourism, the research approach involves recognizing multiple interconnected dimensions relevant to the studied area. These dimensions primarily stem from the theoretical concept of insularity, which is discussed in the next chapter, and from the specificities of the Croatian island area identified in previous research. Six dimensions were researched from the perspective of the local population, including relevant development stakeholders. These dimensions are lifestyle, transportation, economy, projects, youth, and the future. By examining these dimensions, we aim to identify benefits and developmental threats for the municipality of Postira.

The paper, along with the introductory part containing a brief review of research conducted primarily by domestic authors, is structured into five additional chapters. The second chapter provides a theoretical introduction dedicated to the concept of insularity and its contextualization within the local island conditions. This is followed by a chapter that presents the spatial framework of the research. The fourth chapter outlines the research methodology, and the fifth presents the results. The sixth and final chapter is dedicated to the discussion and conclusions of the research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - ISLANDNESS

In order to determine the optimal development direction for an area, it is necessary to first examine the opportunities it offers and the problems that require additional attention. The spatial context is exceptionally important in planning, and in the example of Postira is best seen in

light of its location on an island, and all the properties associated with this islandness. Furthermore, the question is raised as to what the islandness implies, and which features can affect spatial development, primarily of the larger inhabited Croatian islands.

Hay (2006) emphasizes that there are numerous unanswered questions about the nature of insularity as a phenomenon, as well as the emergence of many contradictions in the main features that define an island. An example can be the island boundary, which is often a strong driver of identity and awareness of the status of isolation, defining the space and its inhabitants. However, this boundary also brings with it the need to overcome it due to its restrictive nature, which makes living conditions more difficult. The relationships between island isolation and connectivity are crucial in the study of islands because they encompass key differences that define what an island is. The issue of connecting islands can be addressed in various ways: through bridging, introducing air routes, establishing maritime lines, etc. Each of these methods brings about different processes and affects the relationship between physical and temporal distance in different ways (Ronström, 2021).

These spatial specificities have led to the need for a special approach in their study. The importance of the researcher's starting perspective was highlighted, emphasizing that it should be closely tied to the specific island under study and arise from it. This stands in contrast to past practices where islands were often uncritically viewed from an external perspective, without considering the indigenous island perspective (Baldacchino, 2008). Defining this perspective requires an understanding of the daily way of life because it not only forms part of the local population's identity (Šterc & Komušanac, 2014) but can also be a concrete determinant in defining spaces, such as distinguishing between urban and rural areas (Lukić, 2010), and even island versus non-island areas. The importance of lifestyle in island societies is further emphasized by Podgorelec and Klempić Bogadi (2013). Authors explore the advantages and disadvantages of island life, feeling of security, leisure activities, and solitude, with a special focus on family life.

However, not all islands are remote or isolated, and not all islanders feel isolated (Burnett et al., 2021). Furthermore, the concept of isolation is not exclusive to the islands themselves, even though many languages share a common root for the word (Ronström, 2021). Some islands are more central than others in terms of functions and accessibility, which is why the issue of transportation connectivity is crucial when discussing island life. It determines the level of peripherality due to their geographical separation (Pelc, 2017). However, when discussing island conditions in Croatia, isolation remains one of the main characteristics of insularity, and

the developmental challenges it brings stem from the combination of the limitations of island space and its resources (Šimunović, 1997). Additionally, the social roles that often separate islands from the mainland centre also play a significant role (Rogić, 1994).

The economy and its tendency to connect with tourism on islands, which seemingly occurs naturally (Baldacchino, 2013), also has an impact not only on economic indicators but also on all aspects of society. When looking at Postira in the context of this chapter, its long tradition of the presence of all sectors of the economy stands out, and that is not common on the tourism-oriented Croatian coast. The economic diversity of the municipality of Postira (Zlatar Gamberozić & Tonković, 2015) represents an opportunity for achieving more stable and sustainable development, which is particularly important due to the need to limit economic growth on islands because of their greater spatial and resource constraints compared to the mainland (Šimunović, 1997). For the island of Brač, Šimunović (1997) discusses its well-developed infrastructure as an advantage but also advises caution. At first glance, its greatest developmental asset appears to be its proximity to the mainland, which, given its closeness to Split, is a justified assumption. However, island systems (economic, ecological, etc.) are more interconnected and sensitive to changes and external influences (Starc, 1992). The proximity and influence of a large urban centre like Split also pose a threat to the balance of the systems of Brač.

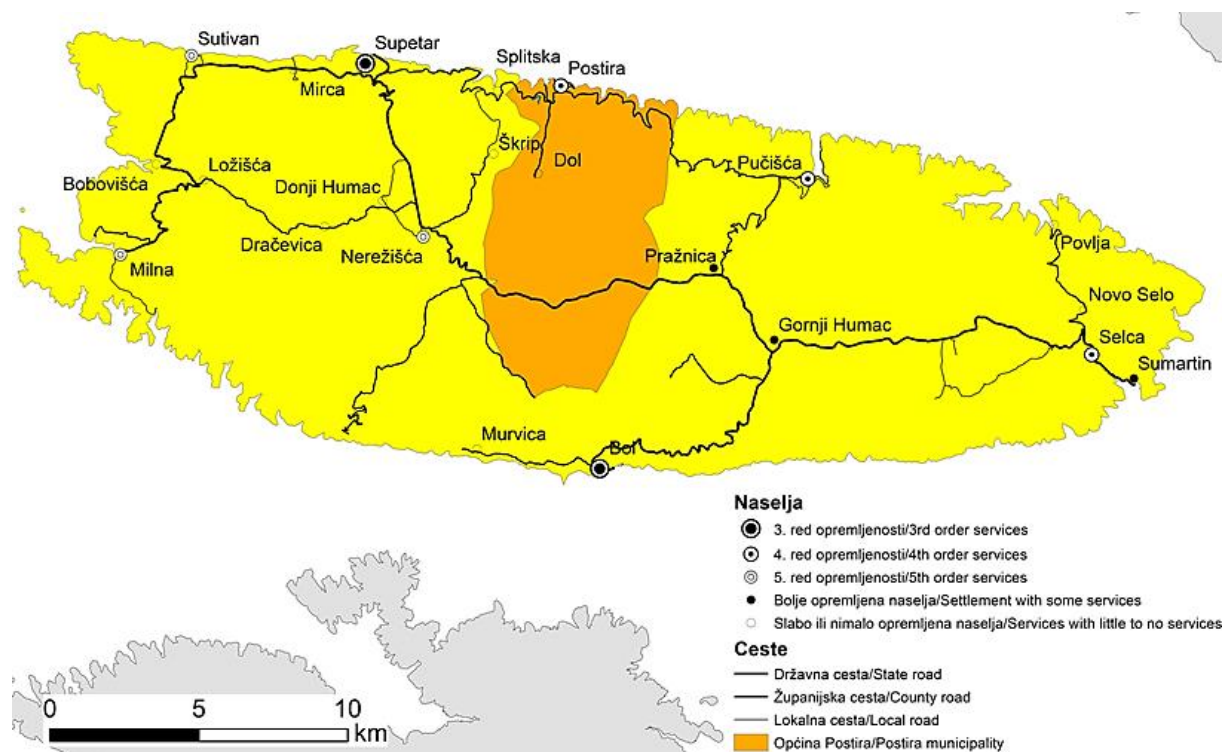
Taking into account the aforementioned points, it is indeed necessary to stimulate and support the economy on islands, which results in the need for implementing larger infrastructure projects. This need was further emphasized by Croatia's accession to the EU, placing the development of island areas under special focus through territorial cooperation, communication mechanisms of the Parliament and the Commission, and other means. Thereby the islands were provided with opportunities to overcome developmental constraints (Rubić, 2021). The most tangible manifestation of this is seen through the utilization of EU funds and financing, which provide material support for delivering tangible projects that make a difference in the lives and opportunities of local population.

Considering that demographics and demogeography are pivotal topics in the study of island areas in Croatian literature, as evidenced by numerous papers on the subject, it is important to examine the municipality of Postira in that respect. The key aspect of demogeographic development in any area is its young population and ensuring their numbers and retention. This is crucial for maintaining population dynamics and the vitality of the area, which is particularly concerning due to the declining trend of young people on Croatian islands, who are key contributors to positive indicators (Nejašmić, 2013). Therefore, understanding their challenges and

perspectives, which are closely tied to the future of the place, is essential. This knowledge forms the basis for specific actions aimed at increasing opportunities to retain young people and sustain the vitality of the area.

RESEARCH AREA

The municipality of Postira is one of eight local self-government units on the island of Brač (Town of Supetar and seven municipalities), and lies in the central interior area of the island. It extends from the island's north coast overlooking the channel Brački kanal, where the main settlement of Postira is found, to nearly the southern coast and the peak of the hill Vidova Gora (Fig. 1). The municipality covers an area of 47 km² (the municipality of Postira, 2021), and its territory includes only two settlements: Postira with a population of 1448 and nearby Dol with a population of 108 (DZS, 2022). Both settlements lie to the north of the territory, leaving a large area unsettled and cut off from the main settlement due to the largely inaccessible hilly terrain without any road connections.



Slika 1. Općina Postira na otoku Braču

Figure 1 Municipality of Postira on the island of Brač

Izvor / Source: SRPJ, 2013; Radeljak Kaufmann, 2015; Geofabrik, 2021.

In terms of centrality, Postira is in the category of an area centre (Lukić, 2012), or a 4th order settlement in terms of services (Radeljak Kaufman, 2015) with all the necessary functions that characterise this type of settlement. The number and importance of functions in Postira is seen in the presence of the gravitational potential that surpasses the boundaries of the municipalities, and in some segments attracts not only Dol but also Splitska that lies within the boundaries of the Town of Supetar. However, the greatest significance of this settlement in the spatial context of the island of Brač is limited due to its transport position between Supetar, as a sub-regional centre in the full sense (Lukić, 2012) and Pučišća, which is also in the category of an area centre (Lukić, 2012) with several additional services not found in Postira, i.e., a secondary school and a music school. An additional extenuating circumstance is seen in Postira's transport dependence on the county road that leads to Supetar or Pučišća, making it the only way to reach the settlement, with the exception of private maritime transport.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of the research emerged from contextualizing the concept of insularity, discussed in the theoretical introduction, within the specificities of the Croatian island space. It was constructed based on six interconnected topics relevant to the developmental aspects of islands: lifestyle, transportation, economy, projects, youth, and future. These topics were designed to capture multifaceted dynamics that influences the development of island communities and provides a comprehensive understanding of their challenges and opportunities. The selected topics are just one of many possible perspectives for observing the developmental opportunities and threats to the development of Postira and the island of Brač, and by no means are they considered a comprehensive framework. However, based on the arguments presented and considering the significant attention of numerous studies to this area, these topics were chosen because they expand and deepen the existing scientific knowledge, especially in topics dedicated to the role of projects in development or reflections on the future. For the purpose of this research, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the residents of the municipality of Postira, including several persons significant for the development and decision-making at the municipal level, such as the head of the municipality and the chairperson of the Association Hrapaćuša from Dol. Respondents were recruited through active field work, recommendations of the local population, and the snowball method. The majority of those surveyed were residents of Postira (9), and three were residents of Dol. Of the 12 interviews, 10

were conducted in May 2022 directly in the field, and two were conducted in writing in 2021 due to limited opportunities for live meetings caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews were recorded in their entirety and then transcribed, coded, and the interrelations between codes were displayed graphically, similar to the research by Bokan and Obad (2018). The questions in the survey were divided into six sections depending on the topic: way of life, transport, projects, economy, youth, and the future, and individual schematic models and the most important results were presented for each section.

RESULTS

Way of life – ‘Peace. Quiet. Beauty.’

In response to the survey, the respondents most often mentioned a peaceful life in a natural environment as the positive aspects of life in Postira (code A1)¹. However, it was found that respondents from Dol spoke more about nature and the natural environment as a part of their daily life (A3), while respondents from Postira spoke more about the peaceful way of life (A1) (Fig 2). Respondents stated that this combination of a natural environment and a small, rural community (A5), despite its shortcomings (A12) largely contributed to a good quality of life (A2). Tradition is also significant in the life of Postira residents, as seen in the great importance of the church and religion, and through a traditional love of playing music (A13).

“You come here, park your car in the shade, and come into the house: peace, quiet, shade on the car. It’s indescribable. Either in Split or in Supetar or Postira, the sea, it’s so hot, so hot, and you come here and right away it’s one level less hot, all the greenery (A3), peace (A1)” – J.G. (48²), Dol

“Peace. Quiet. Beauty.” – I.B. (59), Postira (A1)

“... to have a good ear, because everyone sings here; Postira is a specific place because everyone plays an instrument and sings (A13) ... I don’t know... We all are keen on going to church (A8)” – M.M. (28), Postira

The main difference between the way of life in Dol and in Postira was seen in the cooperation among residents. While people in Postira help one another and cooperate on their own, private projects, the residents in Dol come together for work that benefits the entire settlement,

¹ Hereinafter only the code will be listed: Way of life – code A, Transport – code B etc.

² The number in the brackets refers to the age of the respondent.

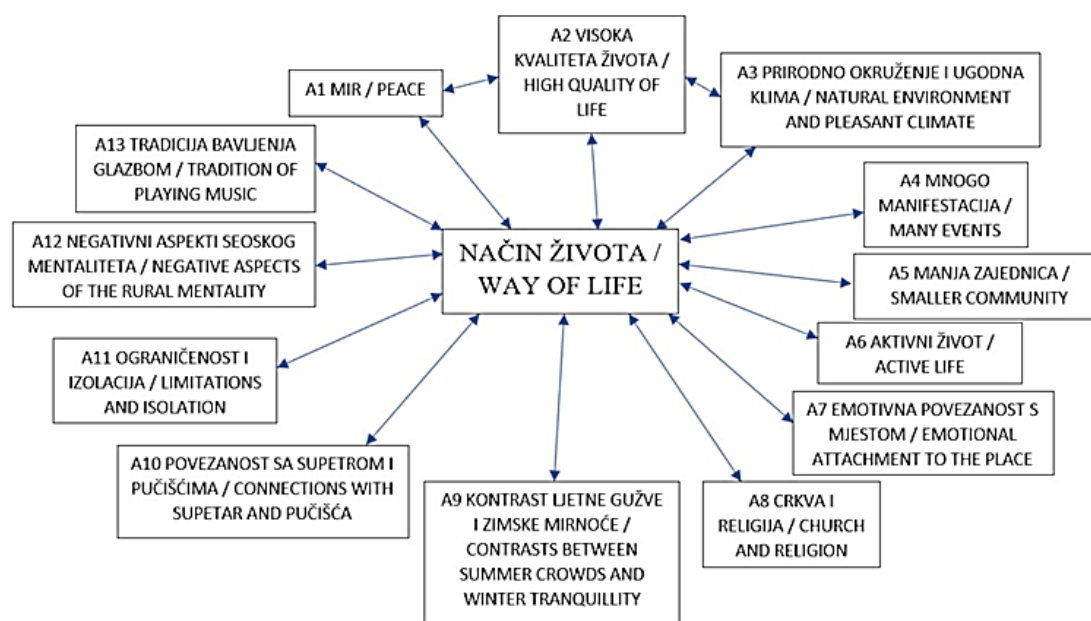
with numerous volunteer campaigns to clean-up the settlement and create a more pleasant environment for both residents and visitors (A6). This has created a strong bond among the residents of Dol and creates a positive sense of community and emotional belonging to the settlement, which further contributes to positive, concrete progress in the settlement (A7).

'I can proudly say that Dol is a special place, where this patriotism is nurtured from the youngest age (A7). This is seen in our annual volunteer campaigns and so on... Thousands of volunteer hours' (A6) – J.G. (29)

In addition to the island's isolation (A11), the seasonality of life here is also interesting, due to the strong effects of tourism in Postira. In summer there are many more people in the municipality due to large numbers of tourists, with more entertainment and all the main events, even traditional ones, held in the summer months. The only exception is the World Cup in Olive Picking, which is held in autumn when the olives are ripe (A4). This situation leads to a strong contrast between the summer and winter way of life, as in winter most people stay at home or visit one another at their homes, with limited access to cultural and entertainment content, while summer months are different (A9). However, the respondents gave the impression that this seasonality is not necessarily a problem, and that they are accustomed to this annual rhythm and find positive aspects in both ways of functioning (Fig 2).

'I don't know, both are nice. Every season has its charm. In winter it's empty, in summer it's full, so this balance between the two is nice.' M.M. (28), Postira (A9)

'An island is an island, and we are surrounded by the sea, so it's not that easy to just hop over to the city.' – a Postira resident (A11)



Slika 2. Tema 1: Način života
Figure 2 Theme 1: *Way of life*

Transport – ‘Right from the start we have to pay for transport that we don’t have access to at all times.’

The negative characteristics and problems concerning transport as an aspect of life are all but a certainty due to the island space, considering that isolation is its primary characteristic (Fig. 3). Some of the listed negative transport experiences highlighted by respondents were time lost in travel in comparison with mainland residents (B5), higher cost of living (B6) and overall poor transport connections between islands (B4).

‘In Split in half an hour you can get to Bauhaus, Pevex, all these places, but from Brač you need an hour and 15 minutes. This is the only complaint I have, is that we lose a lot of time.’ – J.G. (48), Dol (B5)

‘Not really. There is no connection from island to island, instead you have to take a private boat from Brač to Hvar or from Hvar to Vis. Private’ – T.V. (73), Postira (B4)

‘In order for us to go anywhere, we can’t go anywhere for 0 kuna. Right from the start we have to pay for transport that we don’t have access to at all times.’ – a Postira resident (B6)

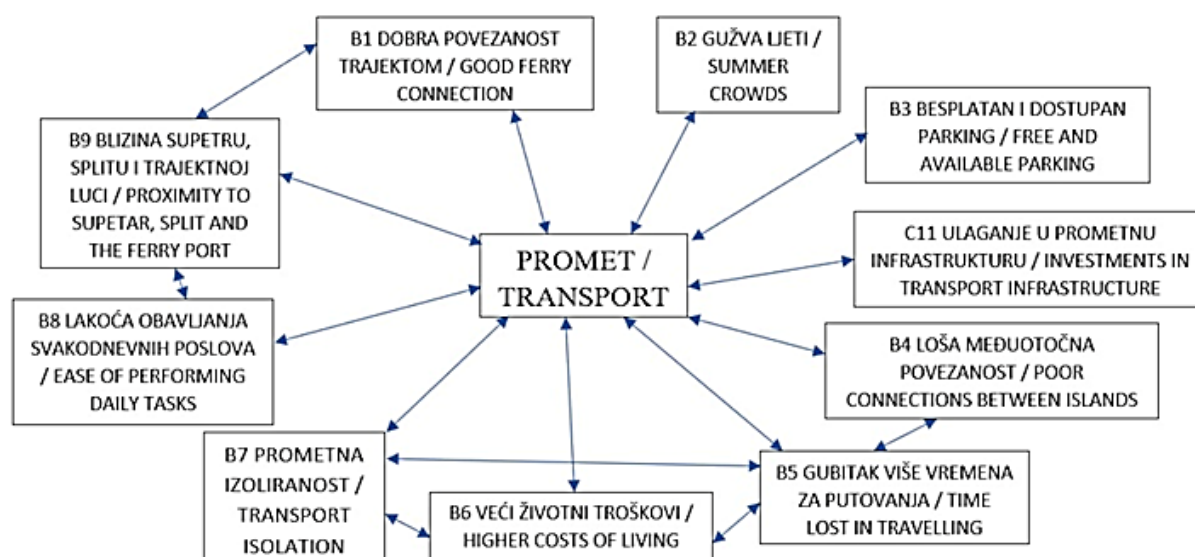
However, the respondents highlighted some transport aspects as positive. What proved to be exceptionally important is the proximity and connection with Supetar and ultimately Split

(B9) due to the frequency of ferry crossings on the Split – Supetar line (B1), and the level of services on the ferries, which the respondents stated was very high in comparison with earlier times. The advantage of the ease of performing everyday tasks in a small place (B8) was stressed, in addition to satisfaction with parking availability (B3), especially in the settlement of Dol, while in Postira this issue showed a pronounced seasonality of life due to the summer crowds that are increasingly decreasing the quality of life (B2). It is important to stress the project implemented to constructing the new road Postira – Dol, which has greatly eased the access for the residents of Dol (C11) (Fig. 3).

'We have a ferry, a luxury ferry that goes from Supetar to Split in an hour's time. That goes by in a flash and you can come and go whenever you want.' – J.V. (54), Postira (B1)

'There is traffic, people all over the roads, it happens in August. Everything is full in the evening when they come to the taverns for dinner. Then there were ... lots of cars.' – J.G. (48), Dol (B2)

'This was the complete reconstruction of the road Dol – Postira, with a length of nearly 2.5 kilometres. The value of the investment, I'm not sure, but I think it was more than 15 million kuna.' – J.G. (29), Dol (C11)



Slika 3. Tema 2: Promet
Figure 3 Theme 2: Transport

Projects – ‘This hotel will now change everything. Everything.’

In the previous section, mention was made of the project to construct the road Postira – Dol (C11). However, other projects that have been completed or are planned in the territory of the municipality were also mentioned (Fig. 4). New infrastructure investments (C2), sports fields (C9) and a planned sports hall (C4) are mostly welcomed, while the status of Dol as an ethno-eco village of Split-Dalmatia County presents an opportunity that the residents of this villages are taking full advantage of, and planning to continue to develop as part of their future tourism offer (C7).

‘We have implemented three European projects: construction of the Dol – Postira sewage system, Postira fish market, and Hrapoćuša House interactive centre in Dol.’ – S.M., Postira (C2, C6)

‘Tennis courts were built and I know that there is a tennis school for children, which is also great.’ M.M. (28), Postira (C9)

‘We have been involved in this (Ethno-Eco Village) for 15 years ... (C7). The sewage system, this is the first settlement on the continental side of the island. As we’ve heard, all of these Adriatic islands have received sewage systems. And new water and new electricity, and a 3 km promenade.’ – J.G. (48), Dol (C2)

In terms of financing, some municipal projects received financial support from the European Union, while private projects depend from person to person. It is evident that additional initiatives and training of the local population are needed in order to maximise the efficacy of use of EU funds. The examples of investments by residents who have since moved away are also interesting. Most of these investments were mentioned in the context of restoration of sacral structures (C3), and the existing initiative of Dol residents who financed part of one such restoration project from their long-term savings (C5).

‘We, as Dol residents, we residents have collected three hundred and some over the past thirty... now 40 years. More than 300 thousand. Instead of buying wreaths at funerals, we donated to this project.’ – J.G. (48), Dol (C5)

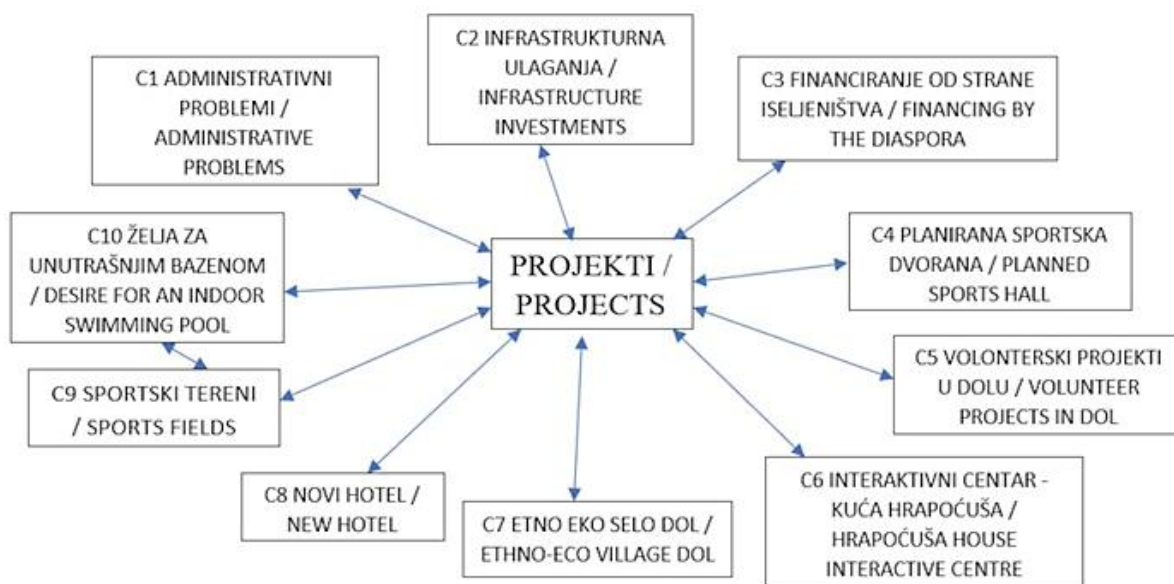
‘We recently had a case where a former resident donated the total funds to change the roof, 400 thousand kuna, to change the roof on the parish church.’ – J.G. (29), Dol (C3)

Though it is evident that there is a number of projects underway in the municipality of Postira, one of the most significant in recent years, the construction of the hotel *View*, has divided respondents. Some believe that this hotel will bring additional capital and new jobs to the municipality, while others view it as an excessively large structure in space that will reduce the quality of living and appearance of the settlement, and is only an extension of the already excessive focus on tourism (C8). For this reason, the needs of the local population were overlooked, like the expressed desire for an indoor swimming pool (C10).

'This hotel now changes everything. Everything. Because it's now one... And it will seriously ruin the quality of life, without any financial effect. Really, it's unnecessary.' – I.G. (59), Dol (C8)

'This hotel, now they're building the hotel. I think it's fantastic. There will be jobs for everyone.' – T.V. (73), Postira (C8)

'I think that this is how it goes, when they do projects in Postira, these projects are again exclusively made for tourism. There is a very heavy emphasis on that.' – Postira resident (C8)



Slika 4. Tema 3: Projekti
Figure 4 Theme 3: *Projects*

Economy – ‘...in Postira, very few people do not work.’

The main characteristic of the economy in the municipality of Postira is its diversification and uniform development of different branches (Fig. 5). This is highly desirable from the aspect of economic security and resilience (D7), and in the sense of job opportunities for residents. This is best seen in the relatively low unemployment level, and the number of people employed at the factory but who live outside the municipal territory (D13).

‘It has never been exclusively only tourism or only agriculture. Postira has always been specific for that reason, and this is how we always survived throughout history. The people worked in fisheries and agriculture and tourism and different branches that have always supported the settlement.’ – M.M. (28), Postira (D7)

However, in judging by the respondent’s answers, the branches of the diversified economy in the territory of the municipality are not sufficiently interconnected, though there are some good examples such as the World Cup in Olive Picking that is organised every year and that has successfully connected agriculture and tourism (D4). It can be observed that there is an awareness among respondents on the positive aspects of creating additional connections between sectors, and that greater effort should be placed on this in the future, and also on economic cooperation between islands, as most respondents believe this to be an unexploited potential (D8). They also stressed the good exploitation of EU funds, though this aspect could be further improved (D1).

‘Little. So, all these years with the same situation, they built a new factory, that is all great (D13) but they have never had the need for any of the managers, the acting director, to cooperate with the Postira Tourist Board.’ – J.G. (48), Dol (D4)

‘This World Cup in Olive Picking. This is an example of a great project. Unique in the world, and lovely, and I think it is really cool.’ – M.M. (28), Postira (D3)

‘It is the key, I repeat again, that for family farms (OPG) that they can directly sell everything they grow and make... that the person who worked the land to grow that tomato, who worked the trees to get that litre of oil, that they can directly sell their products at a better price, and that is the key to success.’ – J.G. (29), Dol (D2)

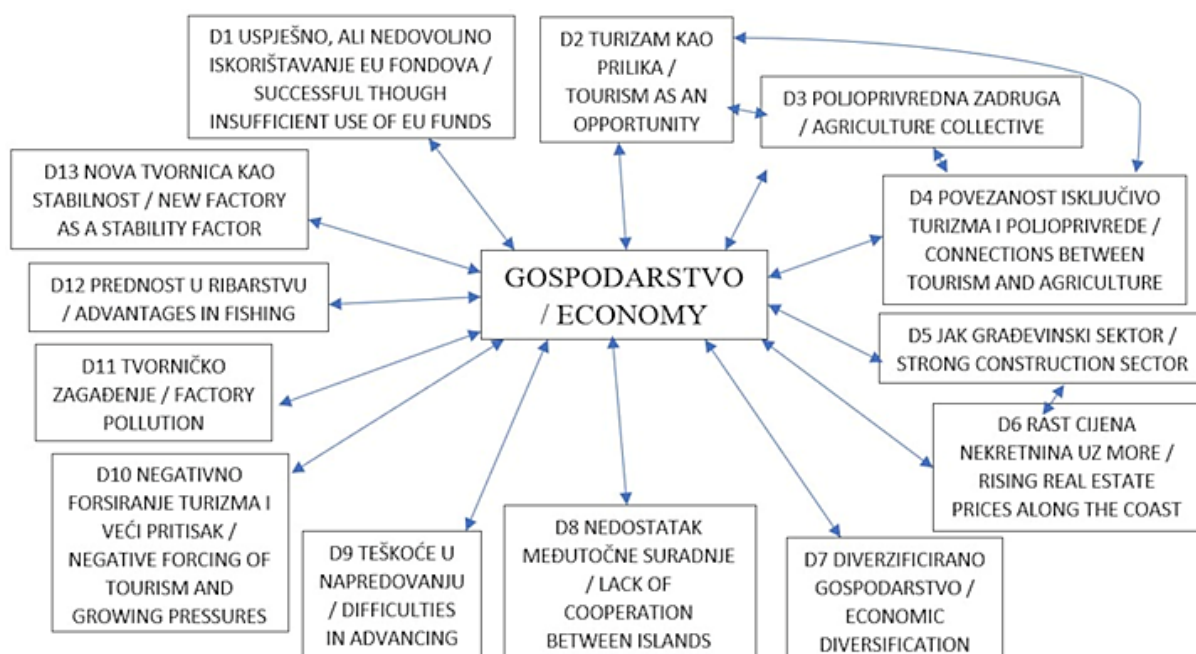
The developed economy has brought the residents of Postira numerous advantages, though there are also some negative aspects. Respondents were mostly concerned about the consequences, such as factory pollution, destruction of the natural environment (D11) and negative

pressures of tourism activities on the space in the summer months, seen in the crowds, noise and other effects that degrade the quality of life (D10). Such changes have significantly affected the development of the construction sector (D5) and the rise in real estate prices along the coast (D6).

‘The factory yes, in any case, people are working. But not in the place where it was built. The hill that the factory was built on are the lungs of Postira, like Marjan is for Split’ – Postira resident (D11)

‘I am bothered by the fact that today there is no one who will hear you out, they don’t follow tradition and... preserve the heritage that was left to us by our elders, but they want to change everything, pave everything over, and turn it into something else.’ – J.V. (54), Postira (D10)

‘Some people were recently saying that Postira is the largest construction area on the island of Brač.’ – M.M. (28), Postira (D5)



Slika 5. Tema 4: Gospodarstvo
Figure 5 Theme 4: *Economy*

Youth – ‘The youth spend their social life sitting on a café terrace, and I think this is not enough.’

For the young residents of the municipality of Postira, there are numerous positive aspects of life that should be further enhanced so that more youth decide to remain and live in Postira or Dol. The greatest advantages for youth according to the respondents were the good employment opportunities (E15) and family properties as starting capital (E3), giving them an excellent start at financial stability (E7). This is also connected to the ease of resolving the housing issue that is a problem for many young people in Croatia (E4).

‘Here, there is little to no first properties. But if you have a family property that has been passed down, it’s much easier to restore it, renovate it here, than in other places...’ – J.G. (48), Dol (E4)

‘There is a better financial security in comparison with the mainland. In today’s times.’ – I.G. (59), Dol (E7)

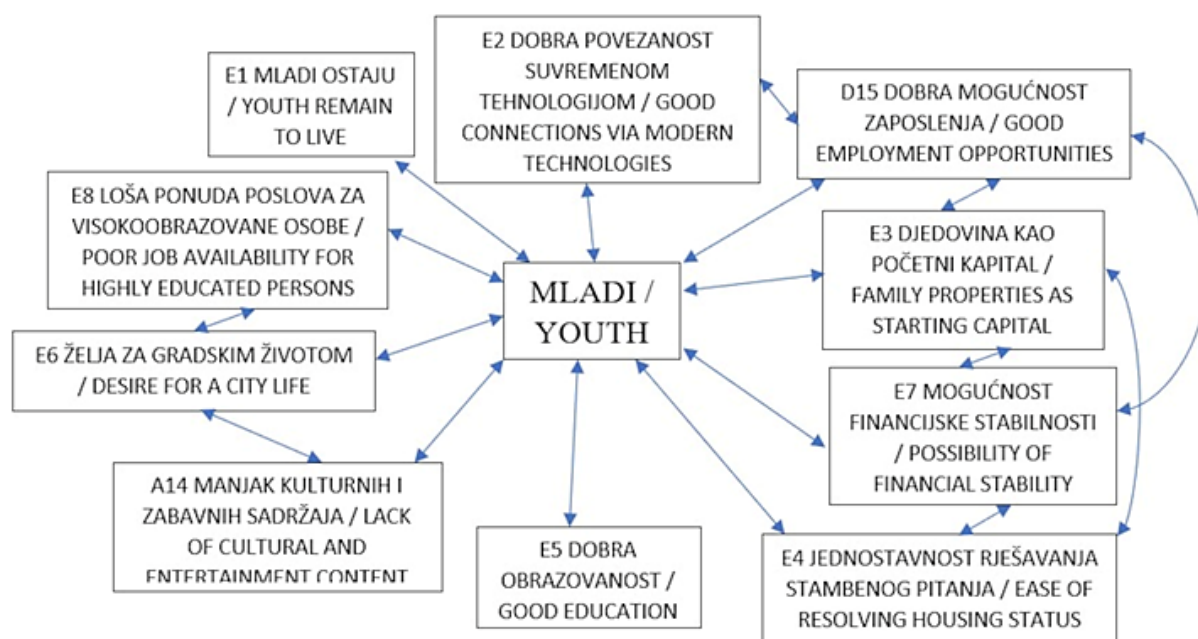
‘We gave them our family properties, we who left here. They got everything for free, meaning the annual economic category, meaning the plantations and fields, and housing, they got it all for free.’ – I.G. (59), Dol (E3)

The negative aspects that most degrade the quality of life for youth are a lack of cultural content and other leisure activities, which often results in a desire to move to an urban centre (E6). During the year, youth mostly spend their time socialising at cafés or at private parties (A14). Moreover, highly educated young people often have no employment opportunities within their profession, and are forced to migrate to a large settlement or to get new qualifications in order to remain in Postira (E8). However, a large number of young people, according to the respondents, are highly educated (E5) and decide to stay in Postira (E1), which improves their future prospects (Fig. 6).

‘New times are coming. This new generation, some of them don’t like it, they want the city, they want different kind of fun, a different atmosphere...’ – J.V. (54), Postira (E6)

‘First of all, there is no cultural content for young people... They youth spend their social time sitting on a café terrace, and I think that this is not enough.’ – Postira resident (A14)

'It's not easy for young people, even more so for those of us who are highly educated than those who have lower qualifications, as they seem to always find their way.' – M.M. (28), Postira (E8)



Slika 6. Tema 5: Mladi
Figure 6 Theme 5: Youth

Future – ‘...I’ll be an optimist, so I’ll say, ‘I see Postira as a great place’

The future of the municipality of Postira will largely depend on its further demographic development. Despite the negative natural population growth rate (F1), the current situation is acceptable due to a positive migration balance which has resulted in a general population growth (F3). However, in the long-term, population ageing will have negative effects on the sustainability of the space, and therefore, additional political measures will be needed to successfully achieve a positive demographic result (F2).

'Unfortunately, if we look at the period of the past 10 years, the natural growth is negative, there are more people dying than being born (F1). However, the population in the municipality is experiencing a slight growth as people from abroad or from urban centres are coming here to live in our municipality.' – Š.M., Postira (F3)

'As demographic measures, we have maternity support, co-financing 70% of the price of kindergartens, we have implemented a stimulating public utility charges, financing

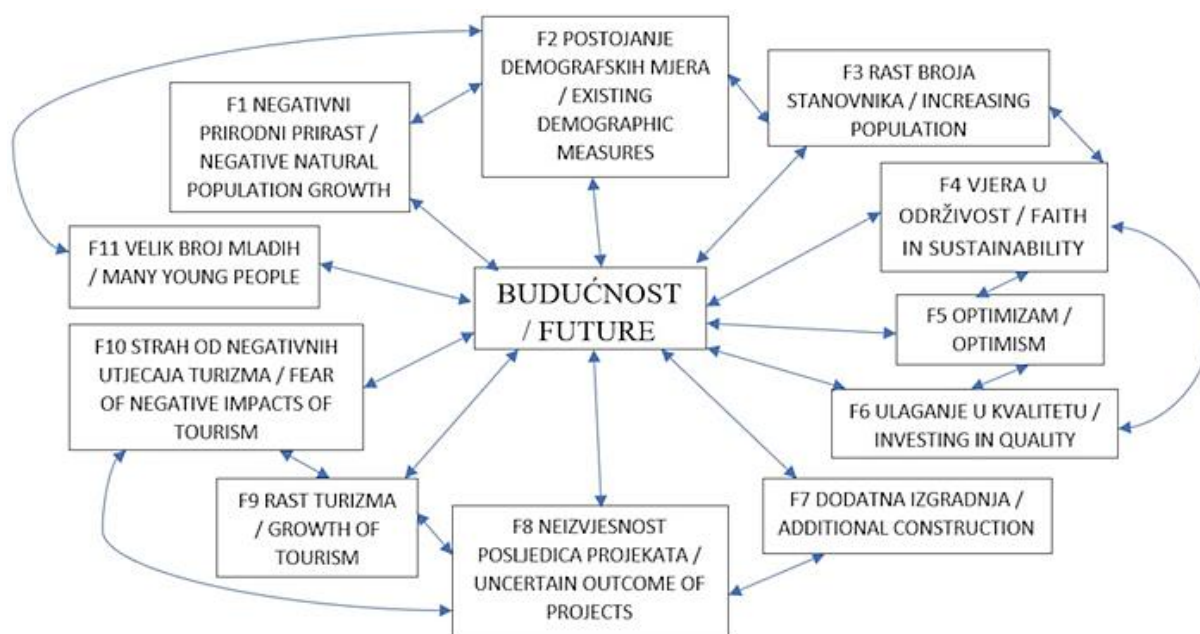
school workbooks, grants for pupils and students, and tenders on land allocation and the right to build for young families to resolve their housing status. – Š.M. , Postira (F2)

Generally speaking, respondents are optimistic about the future (F5). Most consider that it will continue to be a nice place to live, and believe that it will continue to develop sustainably. They also believe more efforts will have to be invested in product quality, infrastructure and life in the future (F6). However, due to the large number of new projects (F8), their greatest concern was concerning excessive tourism development (F9) and there is a justified fear of excessive growth and activities that would disturb the existing balance that Postira has nurtured for many years (F10).

'More existing structures in Dol should be renovated (F7), of course in line with conservation principles, so that they don't stand out ... (F6) above all I believe in a positive future for Dol.' – J.G. (29), Dol (F5)

I'm going to be an optimist so I'll say, 'I see Postira as a great place in the future, I see Postira with young people returning here, because that's what I wish for (F11), for more cultural enrichment, for more crops to be planted in the fields, for all three branches of the economy to develop evenly, so that we can live in a healthy, exclusively healthy, environment with prosperity that is suitable for people in the 21st century.' – a Postira resident (F4, F5)

'I don't know, I only fear that we don't become a typical tourist town, even though we are heading in that direction''' – M.M. (28), Postira (F10)



Slika 7. Tema 6: Budućnost
Figure 7 Theme 6: *Future*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Islandness is a complex theoretical concept that was contextualized in the conducted research through several key topics specific to inhabited Croatian islands, especially the larger ones. The essence of the concept lies in the researcher's starting perspective, which is intimately connected to the island under study and emerges from it. This approach contrasts with past practices where islands were often viewed uncritically from an external perspective, without considering the indigenous island perspective (Baldacchino, 2008). This approach determined the research methodology and the identified topic-related sections. The first and, in our opinion, the most important insight is that when the findings are considered in the context of tourism activities, as one of the major drivers of change in the Mediterranean area, it becomes evident that Postira stands out from some typical examples of the Mediterranean islands. For example, the research on the island of Rodos showed how mass tourism and a one-dimensional economy can negatively impact not only the experience of life for island dwellers, but also result in a significant level of irritation they feel towards tourists (Pappas & Tsartas, 2009). In Bol, also on Brač, the issue of mass tourism is prominent and harmful for spatial development, while Postira is highlighted as a positive example of economically more balanced development that is not solely dependent on tourism (Zlatar Gamberožić & Tonković, 2015). However, according to our research, the construction of a new hotel proved to be both an economic opportunity and

a threat to sustainable and balanced development that could tip the scales towards mass tourism. Given the current conditions, this should be avoided, since there are already certain issues in the summer months, such as traffic, crowds, noise and a lack of available parking. The recurring motif of a diversified economy that characterizes Postira can be theoretically understood in the context of the lagging rural areas of Croatia in the processes of industrialization and modernization, leading to prolonged periods of village decline (Štambuk, 2002). Štambuk (2014a) also identified the decentralization of industry and the gradual development of the tertiary and quaternary sectors as prerequisites for the future revitalization of villages. Such a proposal for further development suggests that modern rural areas should not remain as agricultural territories but rather evolve into spaces for diverse activities and opportunities with the potential for quality living. Agriculture, however, transcends being merely an economic activity; it is a lifestyle and is the most significant characteristic of the landscape (Štambuk, 2014b). Therefore, the significance of olive cultivation and other branches of agriculture in Postira should be highlighted positively as they represent the most tangible aspects of the area's rurality. The non-agricultural secondary sector within rural areas, such as the fish canning industry in the case of Postira, serves as a demographic stabilizer and an attractive factor that supports progress and meets the general needs of the community (Štambuk, 2014b).

In terms of accessibility, although respondents identified several negative aspects of transport issues, it seems that they are aware that Brač is in many respects in a far better situation than many of the inhabited Croatian islands (Rogić, 1994; Starc, 1992) due to its relatively small distance from the mainland, transport infrastructure and weather conditions.

Considering numerous studies on smaller islands in Croatia, it is also possible to detect both similarities and differences in processes. The demographic situation is similar, characterised by the ageing process, and there is an interest of the former population and temporary residents to positively influence the island space (Šulc & Zlatić, 2014). The differences lie in the better opportunities for employment than on smaller islands, such as Zlarin (Klempić Bogadi & Podgorelec, 2011), though this problem is primarily in the quality of work available. In addition, there is a more prominent deagrarianisation of small islands due to their declining function as a place to live (Faričić & Magaš, 2004); however, this process is not pronounced in the municipality of Postira. The existence of agricultural cooperatives and preservation of the olive growing tradition resulted in a very successful level of agricultural activities in the municipality, which further contributes to sustainable economic development that is not solely dependent on tourism. This is also a specific characteristic because during the transition period in

Croatia, which began after 1990, cooperatives were stigmatized as relics of the socialist system and did not receive appropriate support and structure from the state authorities. It was only with Croatia's accession to the EU that the Europeanization of the Croatian cooperative system began, and there were indications of positive processes emerging, albeit very slowly (Pejnović et al., 2016).

This paper showed that the municipality of Postira has many benefits as a good place to live due to the high quality of life, feeling of community, peaceful and beautiful environment, and lack of negative impacts of seasonality to the satisfaction of the respondents. The economy is diversified and offers good job opportunities, while the ongoing infrastructure progress ensures an easier daily life for the local population. Islandness implies longer travel time towards regional centres, such as Split, though this is mitigated partly through the good quality of public transport and the proximity to larger towns such as Supetar and Split. However, there are some negative aspects and threats, like a lower level of interconnection between various economic activities, which reduces opportunities to generate additional revenues, the threat of domination by mass tourism due to the construction of the new hotel, and a lack of good quality jobs that would attract and keep the young, highly education population. Though Postira certainly offers young people financial security, the lack of content and leisure activities presents a significant problem that lowers the quality of life and the potential to stay. This lack of opportunity for the young negatively impacts the future prospects. However, despite the uncertainty caused by demographic ageing and shifts towards mass tourism, the residents of Postira and Dol have a largely optimistic view of life and the future. When considering the identified future development perspectives of Postira in the context of scenarios for rural Croatia (Lukić et al., 2022), it is clear that the local specificities of Postira cannot be unequivocally categorized into any of the four scenarios developed. However, especially in comparison with many other island environments, elements of the 'rural renaissance' scenario, which emphasizes multifunctional economy, nurturing and building partnerships in economic and social development, are observable here. On the other hand, there is a threat stemming from the 'growth without development' scenario, where further touristification of the area is highlighted, and which Postira is currently facing.

Author contributions:

A. M.: research conceptualization, literature review, conducting qualitative research, interviewing and coding, writing, preparation of the original paper.

A. L.: research conceptualization, literature review, methodological framework, writing of the final version and review of the complete paper.

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