

Croatia 2030: One Possible Future

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SUMMARY

The text presents an attempt to describe Croatia's problems and define a vision of possible development in the next decade. The first part of the text describes the inherited situation, depicting a diagnosis of Croatian society and economy without the necessary strategic change described by the author. The second part of the text brings a vision and explains in detail what Croatia 2030 could and should look like. The possible future is a country pioneering biodigital tourism and developing its infrastructure in such a way to become a destination for researchers of a new lifestyle based on health, organic food, sustainable living, social harmony, and superior values.

Keywords: Croatia, Development, Future, Inherited.

SAŽETAK

U tekstu se pokušavaju opisati strateški izazovi dugoročnog razvoja Hrvatske i definirati vizija mogućeg razvoja u sljedećem desetljeću. Prvi dio teksta opisuje naslijeđeno stanje, prikazujući dijagnozu hrvatskog društva i gospodarstva bez nužne strateške promjene koju opisuje autor. Drugi dio teksta donosi viziju i detaljno objašnjava kako bi Hrvatska 2030. mogla i trebala izgledati. Moguća budućnost je Hrvatska kao zemlja koja je pionir u biodigitalnom turizmu i razvija svoju infrastrukturu na način da postane destinacija za istraživače novog stila života koji se temelji na zdravlju, organskoj hrani, održivom životu, društvenom skladu i vrhunskim vrijednostima.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you are sitting in a time machine and are just visiting Croatia of the future. The year is 2030. A successful marketing campaign to present the country as a pioneer of biodigital tourism has made that country the most interesting destination for researchers of a new lifestyle based on health, increased interest in organic food, olive oil, sanatoriums, and health hotels. During the past 10 years, cascade retentions have been built on the Sava near Zagreb. With four dams and hydroelectric power plants from Bregana to Prečko, the city received a regulated river, free electricity for public lighting, four recreational lakes, and a safe construction zone along the river Sava with the most beautiful view and rich museum and playground infrastructure for children. Zagreb's Upper Town has become a depoliticized tourist center with many restaurants, nightclubs, and tourist facilities, and state institutions have been moved to the renovated space of the former university hospital in Lanište.

Dubrovnik has become the political and educational center of Southeast Europe with a strong international university and regional centers of the EU, UN, and NATO for ecology, human rights, diplomacy, and military strategy. Hrvatsko Zagorje has opened a mountain road for bicycles, horses, and carriages by which many European tourists travel from castle to castle, in the footsteps of the Middle Ages. The castles have been converted into hotels and amusement

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parks, organizing visitors with education, congress tourism, and health services. Former military facilities and resorts along the Adriatic have become the campuses of the world's leading universities where programs take place, combined with international sports games from sailing and water polo to fencing and golf. In cooperation with German investors, an amusement park "In the Footsteps of Winnetou" was opened on the Lika plateau, offering mountain air tourism, Lika food, rafting, and nature exploration. Croatia has successfully implemented the Islands of Knowledge project, which included Veliki Brijun (European Nobel Center), Prvić (World Entrepreneurship Academy), Koločep (Center for Genetic Engineering), and Susak (International Ethnological Institute).

Do you think this is just an impossible dream? If Finland, Singapore, and Dubai could, why not us? The most important

preconditions are opening our resources to world capital that cries out for smart and profitable projects, then fostering an entrepreneurial climate and creating the conditions for public–private partnerships and investments to drive our attractive resources. By attracting investors, everything becomes possible.

RECYCLING CROATIA 2020

But let's start from the beginning. In this text, I recycle some of the ideas of my book *Croatia 2020*, published 11 years ago.¹ Why did I write that book? Why are these ideas still relevant after a whole decade?

Croatia 2020 was created at the urging of colleagues, associates, and friends. They convinced me that he was obliged to write it for his and their children. First, I struggled with the idea, then I reconciled and surrendered, and finally fell in love with it. Although it was a demanding text that requires years of research and is usually worked on by entire teams, I made it myself and spent only 3 months on it. Or, more precisely, 3 decades. Namely, I spent a good part of my life preparing for this book without being aware of it. Everything I learned, worked, experienced, or fantasized settled, was amorphous and unrecognizable, and then took shape on the computer keyboard with strange ease. When I started writing, I envisioned a systematic strategy, based on mission, vision, goals, actions, and concrete projects. It is as if the state is an enterprise, rational, organized, and easily manageable. The deeper I was in the problem, the clearer it became that, as with any vision, it was actually about shaping a dream, woven from imagination and ambition, from reality and fiction, from science and madness. Now, after 10 years, it's time for a new dream, especially because the old one didn't quite come true.

Why do visions arise at all? The aphorism says that you must first have a dream if you want it to come true. Most people, at least in their youth, have a dream, but later leave its (non) realization to fate. The minority belongs to visionaries who will not give up until they turn their dream into reality. They believe that destiny should not be accepted but should be taken into their own hands. In order for a vision to come true, one needs to try, explore, change, and fight. Nothing will happen by itself, so let's dream, take action, and plan! This is one of the basic ideas of *Croatia 2030*. Let's imagine what kind of country we want to have then, and then let's get organized and take action that will enable that dream to come true! Let's not wait for our problems to be solved by the European Union, the United Nations, multinational companies, or world market trends! If we do not embark on the realization of a courageous and encouraging vision, it will be difficult to avoid a future that brings strikes, street riots, and social revolt of the dissatisfied population.

THE STARTING POINT

Our culture, political, and economic environment typically suffer from modest goals and a lack of vision. Croatia lacks

self-awareness, courage, and readiness for complex and challenging projects and a winning spirit with which global success would be possible. That is why one of the tasks of *Croatia 2030* is to change such an attitude about the future. Without a vision, the country condemns itself to survival and long-term failure. An essential feature of any successful state is ambition, the desire to do something great. Successful people are not satisfied with small goals, insignificant ventures, average results, small projects, and insignificant effects. They have bold visions that raise high expectations. Figuratively speaking, they shoot above the target to hit it safely.

The analysis of countries that have managed to significantly accelerate their development with a visionary approach and bold reforms, indicates several common characteristics. First, vision and strategy alone are not enough to succeed and create global competitiveness. The whole strategic process is important, which will change the value system, the culture of behavior, and the way of thinking. Nations must be able to change their previous views, existing visions, and current strategies and be inventive, building on the existing, but equally creating something new. Another important fact is the necessity of strong leadership from the top. The vision must come, or at least be accepted, from the holders of power. Countries like Israel, Ireland, Singapore, Sweden, Estonia, Denmark, or China have succeeded in their transformation due to strong leadership from the top of the management pyramid. It is important for reforms to win over the majority of the population and all strata of society. It should be noted that success depends on ensuring the long-term approach. Regardless of the changes in government, it is necessary to reach a consensus on strategic changes, as well as on measures and ways to implement them. Changing the party in power must not mean giving up on the vision and successful strategies by which it is translated into life.

All examples of successful countries are based on creating a stimulating climate for innovation and change. In this effort, it is necessary to connect universities, research institutes, ministries, companies, and the entire education system, creating a critical mass of awareness and desire for change.

Also, the innovation environment, as a catalyst for long-term improvement in competitiveness, requires unconditional financial support in line with the idea that investing in knowledge is the most valuable investment.² Another important precondition for the success of the national vision is the fact that it is accepted by the main stakeholders. Social cohesion is needed, based on quality communication and the search for a balance of interests between workers, employers, and the authorities. In a vision, everyone must be equally recognized. Long-term strategic plans must ensure a fair distribution of victims and the effects of change among all sections of the population and society. If such a consensus is not reached, the reforms encounter resistance, strikes, social unrest, and must be abandoned.

An essential rule of good vision is its focus. Successful competitive strategies cannot be based on a frontal approach: the same for everyone and a little for everyone. It is important to set firm priorities and a strong focus.³ Global success is never based on the expectation that national incentives will be the same for all industries and all businesses. It is necessary to select potential winners and give them maximum support. The principle can be called “training the capable” to be even more capable. Priorities may change over time, but without focus and specialization dramatic development strides are not achievable.

WHAT SHOULD CROATIA 2030 LOOK LIKE

After these remarks, let us try to complete the main outlines of Croatia 2030 and show what needs to be done for its realization. The most important resources of Croatia are its people, natural beauty, and geopolitical position. Our basic development strength is and will be knowledge. The knowledge society is built on human capital and enterprising management and on the winning spirit of economic and political leaders. Our goal should be a democratic, rich, internationally affirmed Croatia, a regional leader of the knowledge society. This vision can be vividly expressed by the slogan: “Croatia as the California of Europe,” with the following 10 goals:

- Croatia as a brand
- Homeland of biodigital tourism
- A country of modern governance
- A land of innovation and knowledge
- A land of capable leaders
- A land of youth and a land of change
- A land of entrepreneurship and prosperity
- A land of hope and vision
- A land of harmony and sustainable development
- A country full of gender equality

The existing image of our beautiful world is not in our favor, and we need rebranding. Croatia 2030 must become a world-famous brand. In order to achieve this, it must perceive itself as a corporation whose task is to have a strategy, mission, vision, goals, projects, and programs with which to achieve them. In addition to classical diplomacy, it must establish a system of relations with the world public, define ways of establishing an identity that will be attractive to the world and as such encourage international capital to invest in Croatia, and the international political environment to support and view us with sympathy. Research shows that 70% of the world’s population knows us poorly. This is proof of Croatia’s weak image and lack of efforts to systematically promote a positive image of itself in the world. What messages should Croatia 2030 send to the environment? I propose the following four simple and eloquent phrases that unite our main strategic advantages and thus form the determinants of the Croatian brand, especially important for the success of our tourism:

- A land of unique diversity — no one is as colorful as we are!
- The land of experience — you will not experience what we offer anywhere!
- The land of healthy living — you will return home younger and healthier!
- The land of creativity and adaptation — we are full of ideas, and we satisfy all your needs and wishes!

FOCUS ON BIODIGITAL TOURISM

At a recent meeting of international consultants, the question was asked what is the main strategic advantage of Croatia. Nine out of ten respondents answered that it is a tourist potential. It is one of the fastest growing global industries and a growing market. We need to get involved in world trends with a unique and avant-garde offer based on our inherited and created comparative advantages. We will call this a biodigital tourism strategy. It is about focusing all elements of the tourism industry and its infrastructure on healthy living, intensive use of digital technology, and consumption of organic food. Our hotels and apartments must become a combination of a digital sanatorium, wellness, fitness, and restaurant with a healthy diet. Our medicine will support this strategy through the development of the science and practice of nutrition, high technology, and active life. The main element of our offer should be a healthy Mediterranean diet with organically grown food, olive oil, fish, and whole grains. Such a philosophy of nutrition and life should be supported and explained in schools and the media, building the image of Croatia as a country of health. This means that we offer our guests a dozen selected dishes that we brand as authentic healthy food specialties, from grilled fish and a mixture of Mediterranean vegetables under the baking lid to shrimp with organic rice and Zagorje-made “štrukli” from whole grains. Our agricultural production and processing industry develops and uses foods without pesticides and herbicides, grown in a natural, organic way. The IT industry is creating a technological infrastructure of modern diagnostic devices, telemedicine systems, and hotel health services. The pharmaceutical industry is developing drugs, preparations, and other healthy living infrastructure. Sports events, cultural events, trade, catering, housing, road construction, horticulture, construction, and other activities serve the goals of biodigital tourism. Shipyards produce ships-parking lots that eliminate the problem of lack of parking spaces in tourist centers in the full season.

Based on such a strategy, Croatia 2030 is becoming a global leader in lifestyle tourism (lifestyle tourism, such as the relaxation of the Greek islands or the business bustle of New York), a country that offers health supported by digital technology. This vision is in full accordance with world ecological trends. Our natural resources allow us to connect in a harmonious and convincing story concepts such as ecological state, ecological agriculture, eco-tourism, eco hotels, eco Croatian products, eco souvenirs, and eco lifestyle.

Three classic types of tourist offer should be closely aligned to this vision of lifestyle tourism. These are shopping, culture, and entertainment. Serious tourist destinations must be places to buy and spend, so Croatia must develop a strategy for offering interesting products in top locations. The offer, the design of shopping centers, landscaping and its infrastructure must fit into the described "story" of lifestyle tourism. Guests should be offered appropriate content from culturally diversified Croatian history, inspired by heritage ranging from the ancient Romans and Illyrian Queen Teuta through Napoleon and Austro-Hungary to World War II and recent history. In doing so, one should rely on domestic designers and the best world brands and avoid flooding plastic stands with cheap souvenirs. The offer should be adapted to the needs of different cultures, generations, consumer habits and tastes, educating visitors by offering an authentic combination of proven world values and a Croatian addition to them.

Culture has a special place in the described tourist strategy. Today, the area of classical, and especially high culture, is becoming the subject of interest of a wider population. Museums, exhibitions, concerts, and other cultural events have never been in trend again. The world's top architecture and design are becoming more and more accessible to the average person and traveler. Modern tourism is increasingly focused on interesting experiences and new experiences, so the success of this activity is inconceivable without the growing share of culture in the tourism product. In addition, culture raises the level of enlightenment of the entire nation, directs the strength of our creative and independent individuals to the problems of society and creates in people the need for something more valuable and sublime that we really need in the pandemic crisis we are surrounded by. It has been proven that high culture goes hand in hand with high development. That is why our tourist regions need to cooperate with the world's best cultural institutions, especially museums. Their collections are several times larger than the ones they exhibit. Part of these collections could be lent by the home museums to the Croatian partner institution, so together, with the support of the state, they would renovate the existing and build new facilities on our coast. Efforts should be made to attract domestic and world cultural institutions that will have global relevance, while at the same time being financed by their own earnings and sponsorships. It is important to know that a good part of the profit in tourism is based on the "sale" of added value, in our case a healthy sports life, a healthy organic diet, health services, and culture.

Biodigital tourism strategy requires a combination of classic and innovative approach to entertainment. The ideal place for experimentation is the Croatian islands. Some of them need to be branded for the young, some for the elderly, some for scientists, some for artists, some for naturists, and some for parents with children. Some uninhabited and form urbanistic point of view suitable islands should be leased

for 30 years to a consortium of companies from big and prosperous countries (Italians, French, English, Germans, Chinese, Koreans, Turks, Russians...). Italian, English, French, Chinese, Russian, Turkish, and German could be spoken in these places. Foreign partners would build tourist infrastructure and could use it for guests from their home country. After the expiration of the lease, these islands would be returned to us refurbished and suitable for further tourist exploitation, or the concession would be extended for another period. This would encourage more tourists from the mentioned countries to come to Croatia and get to know the rest of the coast. This would make it easier for us to fight the tourist battle to increase the number of quality guests from large countries, in which cheaper destinations are winning today.

Croatian tourism is not just the coast and the sea. Our economically devastated "belly," composed of Dalmatian Zagora, Lika, Gorski Kotar, Banovina, and Kordun should be developed in the long run as alternative tourist destinations based on clean air, beautiful mountains, picturesque landscapes, clear rivers and national parks Paklenica, Northern Velebit, Risnjak, and especially Plitvice Lakes. They should be populated by the population, giving land in concession to those who are willing to start rural tourism or ecological agriculture. Newcomers and locals should be exempt from paying taxes, creating conditions for companies willing to encourage local development to invest in these areas in accordance with the described tourism strategy.

Without a vision that gives them purpose and meaning, most of the described industries can only survive. If Croatia has a vision of itself as a tourist country with a healthy life, healthy food, macrobiotics, sports, recreation, and wellness, then the government will support such activities through incentive measures, projects, and policies through all channels of action. Through laws, incentives, and projects, they will unite tourism and food production, finance the related development of science, culture, education, and health, pursue trade, entertainment, and transport infrastructure policy in that direction, in a word, do everything to realize their vision.

A global leader in lifestyle tourism must be an example to others. Its state system, its institutions, and its organization must be avant-garde and compatible with the basic spirit of the vision. Most people imagine governing the state as a series of difficult decisions, centralized solving of problems that arise in different parts of the country and in various activities, daily effort of individuals at the top of the pyramid to choose the best solutions, and to order and insist on control. That is why management is often considered a process in which one person decides, where his abilities are exaggerated, and the mistakes made are considered intentional and irreparable. In Croatia 2030, the overall approach to governance should be different. The main task of governing the state is to create rules of the game in which the desired processes will occur spontaneously, and then to

connect the efforts of thousands of people who do their job responsibly, honestly, and professionally, each in their own field of activity. The task of the people at the top is to agree on a strategy based on vision, but also to harmonize interests, set specific goals, and then launch, direct, and connect a series of activities, projects, and jobs that will achieve these goals, with responsibility for results.

Croatia's vision for 2030 must make a turn towards a modern model of the state, in which officials and administration are servants of citizens, not their masters. One of the first steps should be transparency of government spending. All public tenders, every budget item, every travel bill of the mayor or minister, every payment for every project, every subsidy or donation, every advisor's fee; absolutely everything needs to be put on the Internet to be accessible to taxpayers and citizens. Such an infrastructure is simple and easy to establish, it depends only on the culture of the managers and their goodwill. Also, all procedures and procedures by which the administration acts in contact with citizens, must be simple, meaningful, and free of unnecessary bureaucracy. The same goes for (domestic and foreign) investors, tourists, or business partners. In order to achieve this, the state and local administration must be technologically and personnel trained for digital business.

It is natural that such a change of mentality is accompanied by a general affirmation of voluntary and charitable work. Today, when politicians are a hated part of the population because corruption scandals shake all levels of government and characterize the relationship between the state, capital, and interest groups, it is difficult to expect enthusiasm and volunteerism. However, by changing the culture, behavior, and activities of government institutions, an increasing number of citizens will feel the need to be actively involved in those forms of public action that can improve living and working conditions in Croatia. This will strengthen a wide range of civil society institutions whose task is to put pressure on the government, control its behavior, advocate for democratic standards, and fight for a better and more civilized Croatia in 2030. In this way, the country will become more desirable and interesting to its population and guests.

CROATIA 2030 IN SLOGANS

If we want to be surrounded by innovation and creativity, we need to recognize and cultivate such qualities in ourselves and our associates! An environment rich in creatives, is a great place to develop, live, and work. Croatia 2030 must be organized as a country of knowledge and innovation. People who have a lot of ideas have neither the time nor the need to hinder others in implementing their ideas. Knowledge, ideas, and innovations used to be a beautiful decoration of the privileged. Today, creativity brings wealth!

Along with the previously described vision, there are several slogans that describe how Croatia 2030 should look in

the eyes of its citizens, but also in the eyes of the European and world environment. They express the emotion and vividness of the goals of our vision. These are the following ideas:

- California of Europe
- Regional leader of the knowledge society
- An oasis of healthy living
- The state of justice
- Nursery of creativity and entrepreneurship
- Homeland of young people and all who feel that way
- Land of 1246 islands
- Sustainable development model
- Social rights society for all

Here is a brief description of these determinants of Croatia's vision for 2030.

California of Europe. This vision must encourage thinking about the ambition of the goals we set for ourselves. California is a country of high standards, happy and smiling people, digital technologies, and a high quality of life. Keywords are coast, sun, sea, comfort of life, relaxation, creativity, health and beauty, wealth, companies of intellectual production, congresses, universities, knowledge society.

Regional leader of the knowledge society. This vision indicates a concrete goal, the rapid transformation of Croatia into a knowledge society. In doing so, we strive to become a regional leader. The keywords are education, spirituality, institutes, Nobel laureates, intelligence is at stake, advancement is based on abilities, knowledge is power. This vision requires that the inhabitants of Croatia be better educated than the environment, that they know foreign languages better, and that they stand out in the quality of technical-technological education. This vision is accompanied by the ideas of the island of knowledge, as well as metaphors such as "let's give the island to Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk," in other words let's bring the world's centers of knowledge into our solar belt.

An oasis of healthy living. This vision puts health at the center. It is based on the benefits of climate, Mediterranean diet and sports, and active life. Keywords are organic food, nature and ecology, clean air and water, untouched mountains, lakes and forests, unpolluted sea, Mediterranean cuisine, low cholesterol, sports life, bicycles, walks, entertainment, good mood, comfort and relaxation, longevity.

A country of justice. This vision highlights the desire to build a unique business, political, and social environment superior in the protection of individual freedoms and human rights, the quality of democratic institutions, and the efficiency of the judiciary. The keywords are equality for all, tolerance and openness, multiculturalism, fast and efficient rule of law.

A nursery of creativity and entrepreneurship. This vision requires that the priorities and foundations of Croatia's development be creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Innovators and creatives should be encouraged at all levels,



from kindergarten to international innovation festivals. The keywords are play, creativity, research spirit, business incubators, creativity camps, islands of knowledge, creativity of all generations.

The world of young people and everyone who feels that way. This vision acknowledges the fact that young people are the future and hope of the country and its development. A faster and stronger affirmation of young people in all spheres of political, economic, and social life must be achieved. The keywords are the promotion of young people, giving them the opportunity to participate in government, investing in all forms of care for young people from kindergartens to free sports fields in city districts.

A land of 1246 islands. This vision highlights the unique and neglected resource of Croatia, its islands. There are only 66 of them inhabited, suffering from depopulation and aging, economic backwardness, and dependence on seasonal tourism. They should strive to develop as leading resources of tourism and knowledge society strategies. The keywords are islands of knowledge, Robinson Islands, islands of technology, islands of health, islands of ecological food cultures, islands of young people, islands of old people, islands like the world in small.

Sustainable development model. This vision speaks of the aspiration for Croatia to become a country that will apply new forms of organization, based on digitalization and scientific achievements. The keywords are harmony with nature, organic agriculture, recycling, renewable resources, exploitation of natural energy sources, non-hierarchical management culture and the development of harmonious relations in local communities.

Homeland of social rights for all. The vision indicates the aspiration to realize the Scandinavian model of a welfare state in which there are no socially disadvantaged people. The keywords are solidarity, elimination of unemployment, care for the elderly and infirm, care for abandoned children and all other vulnerable groups.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the end, let us address the most important question: how to get capital and knowledge with which to realize Croatia 2030? One source is the European Union. Others are big digital companies like Amazon and Tesla. The third are smart entrepreneurs who create powerful companies like Rimac and Infobip. The fourth are successful representatives of our diaspora who can ensure a stronger inflow of knowledge and money. The fifth is redistribution within the budget at all levels, e.g., to direct money that encourages agriculture, railways, and shipbuilding today to the biodigital sector. The sixth is the opening to industrial, economic, and any other cooperation with China. The learning of the Chinese language should be organized quickly, and favorable conditions should be created for global Chinese companies to choose Croatia as a regional center.

China is a country of enormous investment potential that can invest in large projects for which it finds political or economic interest. True, due to the difference in cultures and traditions, this is not an easy task. However, from the personal experience of a visiting professor in this fascinating country, I am convinced that this element of the vision can be realized and should be combined with strong cooperation and encouragement of investment by the Croatian diaspora, especially the American one.

How much is the vision of Croatia 2030 madness shown? If we believe Mark Twain, a man with a new idea is a lunatic until that idea succeeds. If we believe in such a vision, even if it seems like a utopia, it can be realized. With a lot of effort and a little luck, in 10 years we will get the Croatia we want to leave to our children.

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