Sociological Survey on Attitudes of Representatives of Social Groups in the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar towards Some Aspects of Quality of Life on the Sub-Regional Level

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Abstract

As part of the project "A Social Map of the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar", developed by the Teaching Institute for Public Health of the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar and in association with the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar, a questionnaire-based empirical sociological survey was conducted on a non-random and convenient sample to identify the attitudes of representatives of social groups in each local government unit. The questionnaire had 303 variables and focused on various quality-of-life dimensions: dissatisfaction/satisfaction with the functioning of institutions and infrastructure, the perceived need to improve institutions and infrastructure, the perceived quality of life of vulnerable groups (the young and the elderly), and the perceived need of developing various measures to improve the quality of life of these social groups. Numerous questions focused on satisfaction with everyday life of respondents. Altogether, more than 1200 respondents were surveyed in all of the 35 local government units in the region. The analysis was

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carried out on sub-regional levels (Gorski Kotar, Littoral, and Islands), and it includes descriptive statistics, analyses of variance, chi-square and regression analyses.

Keywords: survey, attitudes of representatives of social groups, perceptions of the quality of life, inequalities among sub-regions

1 Introduction or about the Project

The Teaching Institute for Public Health of the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar, in association with the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar (CPGK), conducted a project entitled "A Social Map of the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar." The project's objective was to define the needs of the population using a range of quantitative and qualitative data regarding the population's social living conditions. Results obtained will be used by both CPGK and the Teaching Institute for Public Health of the CPGK to formulate guidelines, select priorities and plan a number of measures for future interventions in the community aimed at improving the quality of life (QOL).[4] The project focused on each local self-government unit (LSU)[5] and included demographic, social, economic and health-related analysis. Major sources of information for most of the research were statistical publications, existing scientific research and other material available from social institutions. The bottom-up approach, which is increasingly present in development planning today, underlines the necessity of involving the population and interest groups representatives in the planning phase. Clearly, the likelihood that the population will embrace development plans and strategies is far greater if it participates in their creation. In order to obtain insight on the pattern of attitudes of local community representatives regarding various QOL aspects, we conducted empirical research on the attitudes of interest group representatives via survey in each LSU.

As the region consists of three spatial and economic units, it s very important to formulate or identify a vision of development for CPGK. These are Gorski Kotar, a

[4] In this paper, quality of life (QOL) refers to the overall conditions of life and the satisfaction of the population with such conditions, which include: economic security, demographic stability, technical and social infrastructure, health, housing, nutrition, culture, education, entertainment, environmental sustainability, and freedom of choice, (Seferagić, 2000: 38).

[5] At the time the survey was conducted, CPGK consisted of 35 LSUs, that is, 14 towns and 21 municipalities. As of July 2006, the Municipality of Lopar separated from the Town of Rab, making a total of 36 LSUs (14 towns and 22 municipalities) in the County today.

depopulated and economically jeopardised and devastated area; the Littoral, an area accounting for about 70 percent of the County's population and economic potential, which is characterised by an ongoing struggle between manufacturing industries and tourism, severe environmental issues, and an almost completely occupied coastline; and the spatial segment comprising the islands, whose previous development was mainly based on seasonal tourism with no serious and scientific approach to development or state support (Črnjar and Črnjar, 2002: 185).

If we refer to regional planning as "the integrated planning of regional development, representing a necessity in the modern life of a nation ensuring a specific spatial, social and economic inter-regional and intra-regional equilibrium, as well as quality of life and a healthy environment" (Šimunović, 2004: 189), then the planning policy should serve to encourage those guidelines and development measures targeting the sustained development of sub-regions. This goal of sustained development must receive top priority. The current CPGK Spatial Plan, which has an integrated approach to planning, produced positive initial results, evident in a decrease of construction land, increase of green areas, integration of infrastructure corridors, changes to land-use and heightened protection of potable water, the sea, and various important natural unities. However, a development strategy, that is, a CPGK Strategy of Sustainable Development, has not been formulated. Although selective documents have been drawn up, some of them through government support (Sustainable Development Programme of the Kvarner Islands), they have, unfortunately, had little practical application to date.

This paper analyses the (dis)equilibrium existing within the given region. Through the region's spatial division into sub-regions, we shall attempt to reveal the existing (dis)equilibrium of social, economic, and environmental dimensions. For the purpose of this study, "region" presents the CPGK territory as a unit of regional self-government, the sub-regions which are comprised of three spatial and functional units: the Islands, the Littoral, and Gorski Kotar.

2 Conceptual Framework

Social equilibrium is analysed in two dimensions. The first dimension relates to the satisfaction of interest-group representatives with the existing technical and social infrastructure and institutions. The second dimension refers to QOL rating and measures for improving QOL of socially vulnerable groups (young people, the elderly, people in need, and the unemployed).

Economic equilibrium is examined through the way in which sub-regional representatives perceive the extent of efforts and investments made in a range of economic activities up to date.

The environmental dimension, that is, the perception of a healthy environment is analysed through the perceived extent of concern over environmental issues in the given area.

3 Research Methodology

A survey-based social empirical study was conducted as part of the project "A Social Map of the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar" through the collaboration of the Teaching Institute for Public Health of the CPGK and CPGK, as well as the Administrative Department of Health Care and Welfare and the County Institute for Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning Fieldwork was conducted during February, April and May 2006 on a convenient and non-random sample of interest-group representatives. Each LSU received a list proposing potential representatives[6] with regard to the function of an individual within the social structure of the LSU (local self-government, public sector, private sector, NGOs, etc.). The LSUs then sent invitations to interest-group representatives requesting their presence at a meeting about the project's topic, where the project was presented and the representatives surveyed. Depending on its size, each LSU distributed 30 to 100 invitations and, on average, some 30 people per LSU attended the meeting.

The questionnaire contained a total of 303 variables measuring various QOL dimensions. This paper analyses the dimension of interest-group representatives'

[6] *The list contained the titles of positions and functions.*

perceived satisfaction with the existing technical and social infrastructure and institutions. It analyses the economic dimension of QOL through the perceived attention focused on developing a range of activities.[7] The environmental dimension is analysed through the rating of concerns over environmental issues.[8] A series of variables was used to rate both QOL and the measures for improving QOL of socially vulnerable groups (Nazor et al., 2000). A variety of socio-demographic variables (sex, age, education) is also analysed.

Table 1 **Respondent Patterns in Sub-Regional Classification**

Sub-Regions		Managerial Position				
		Senior manager (of a sector, company, institution)	Lower-level manager (of a department, office, supervisor, etc.)	Employed at a non-managerial position	Not actively employed; independent craftsman; volunteer	Total
Littoral	f	119	71	151	99	440
	%	27.0	16.1	34.3	22.5	100.0
Gorski Kotar	f	55	65	89	53	262
	%	21.0	24.8	34.0	20.2	100.0
Islands	f	76	68	112	43	299
	%	25.4	22.7	37.5	14.4	100.0
Total	f	250	204	352	195	1001
	%	25.0	20.4	35.2	19.5	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations.

Self-administered questionnaire was successfully completed by a total of 1,149 persons aged 18 and above, of which 46.7 percent were women and 53.3 percent, men. In the Littoral, a total of 504 persons (43.9 percent) were surveyed in 15 LSUs;[9] in Gorski Kotar, a total of 308 persons (26.8 percent) in 9 LSUs; and in the island region, 337 persons (29.3 percent) in 10 LSUs. Most respondents belong to the 41-50 age group (29.5 percent) and the 51-60 age group (26.1 percent). The cohort aged 31-40 and the cohort over 60 each account for 16.1 percent. The youngest cohort aged 18-31 is also the least numerous (12.1 percent). A total of 55.6 percent respondents have university qualifications; 38.9 percent, secondary school qualifications; and 3.2 percent, postgraduate degrees.

[7] *Listed items taken from Rogić (1996, 1999), Rogić and Štambuk (1998), Štambuk and Rogić (2001) and Raboteg-Šarić and Rogić (2002) have been substantially broadened for the purpose of this study.*

[8] *According to Cifrić et al.(1998), supplemented and altered for the purpose of this study.*

[9] *Methodological reasons required a different questionnaire to be applied to the Town of Rijeka; results obtained have been omitted from this paper (N=109).*

In processing and interpreting data, descriptive statistics were mainly applied. Variance analysis and the chi-square test were used to determine differences among the sub-regions.[10]

4 Research Objectives

We have set the following basic objectives:

- to analyse the differences in the level of satisfaction with the existing municipal and social infrastructure and institutions among the sub-regions;
- to analyse the differences in perceptions relating to the development of a range of economic activities;
- to analyse the differences in social (dis)equilibrium through QOL rating and QOL improvement measures for vulnerable groups (young people, the elderly, the unemployed);
- to analyse differences at a sub-regional level with regard to environmental issues.

The hypotheses are as follows:

- Differences in perceived satisfaction with the performance of infrastructure and social institutions exist in different sub-regions of the County, with the Littoral representatives displaying a higher level of satisfaction than those of the Islands and Gorski Kotar;
- Differences in QOL rating and QOL improvement measures for socially vulnerable groups exist in different sub-regions;
- Differences in perceptions regarding the adequacy of efforts in developing various economic activities exist. Gorski Kotar respondents display a higher level of dissatisfaction with efforts and investments made;
- Gorski Kotar representatives are not as concerned about environmental issues as the other two groups.

[10] *The Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS 14.0 was used to process the data.*

5 Overview of Research Results

5.1 Satisfaction with the Existing Technical and Social Infrastructure

The first dimension analysed in this paper refers to perceived satisfaction with the quality of institutions and facilities in the LSU. A total of 43 variables[11] were listed relating to the level of satisfaction with the performance of institutions of municipal infrastructure, social infrastructure, and a variety of other social institutions. A number of differences[12] referring to 30 out of 43 variables were established among the sub-regions (see Table 2).

According to the average results on the scale of perceived satisfaction with the quality of infrastructures and institutions, the Islands, in comparison with Gorski Kotar and the Littoral, display a lower level of satisfaction with the following: Day-Care Centres, Post Offices, Playgrounds, Sports and Recreational Facilities, and Power-Supply Facilities. The Islands, in comparison with the Littoral, show a lower level of satisfaction with Elementary School Institutions, Facilities for Young People, Specialist Clinics and, in comparison with Gorski Kotar, a lower level of satisfaction with Public Lighting. The Islands respondents, however, have expressed greater satisfaction with Homes for the Aged, Parks and Green Areas. These items show a significant statistical difference between the Islands, on the one hand, and the Littoral and Gorski Kotar on the other.

In comparison with both the Littoral and the Islands, the representatives of Gorski Kotar display a lower degree of satisfaction with the following variables: Museums, Hospitality Facilities, Coffee Shops, Social Centres for the Elderly, Public Road Transport (the number and frequency of bus lines), and Drainage. In comparison with the Littoral, Gorski Kotar shows a lower level of satisfaction with Handicraft Services and Roads, and a higher level of satisfaction with Telephone Network Coverage and Police.

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[11] *On a 5-point scale ranging from "very dissatisfied" coded as 1 to "very satisfied" coded as 5. For the purpose of variance analysis, we have omitted the value of 0 (0 = does not exist in the LSU) transforming it into a missing value.*

[12] *Variance analysis, together with appropriate post-hoc tests (Scheffe Test for homogenous and Tamhane T2 for non-homogenous variances), was used to test the statistical significance of average group results; all tests were conducted at a significance level of 5 percent.*

Table 2 **Satisfaction with the Existing Infrastructure and Institutions – Variances among Sub-Regions**

		1 Littoral		2 Gorski Kotar		3 Islands		F	Variances among groups
		μ	SD	*μ*	SD	*μ*	SD		
1	Day-Care Centres	3.83	0.842	3.73	0.83	3.42	0.917	22.963***	3 < 1 , 2
2	Elementary Education	3.78	0.838	3.71	0.936	3.55	0.959	6.839**	3 < 1
3	Secondary Education	3.49	0.875	3.42	0.932	3.54	0.771	0.865***	
4	Daily Supplies	3.78	0.886	3.66	0.876	3.66	0.835	2.722	
5	Post Office	3.66	0.988	3.81	0.969	3.08	1.017	48.096	3 < 1 , 2
6	Cinema, Theatre	1.97	1.228	1.72	0.918	1.98	1.159	2.292	
7	Museums, Art Galleries	2.71	1.204	1.97	1.093	2.7	1.061	19.976***	2 < 1 , 3
8	Handicraft Services	2.96	1.062	2.59	0.961	2.78	0.961	11.436***	2 < 1
9	Hospitality	3.47	0.954	2.96	1.088	3.54	0.787	35.266***	2 < 1 , 3
10	Specialised Shops	2.77	1.105	2.26	1.071	2.37	0.878	20.965***	2 , 3 < 1
11	Playgrounds	2.65	1.033	2.62	1.018	2.39	0.952	7.141**	3 < 1 , 2
12	Youth Centres	2.04	0.982	1.88	0.821	1.78	0.792	8.503***	3 < 1
13	Social Centres for the Elderly	2.36	1.107	1.93	0.899	2.25	0.978	13.044***	2 < 1 , 3
14	Public Cleaning Service and Garbage Collection	3.43	0.932	3.43	0.911	3.45	0.986	0.053	
15	Water-Supply System	3.83	0.924	3.55	0.985	3.45	1.046	16.629	2 , 3 < 1
16	Power-Supply System	3.96	0.786	3.99	0.763	3.81	0.791	4.996*	3 < 1 , 2
17	Gas-Supply System	2.44	1.199	1.81	1.218	2.95	1.288	21.967***	2 < 1 < 3
18	Renewable Energy Sources	2.41	1.031	2.18	1.04	2.39	1.114	2.197	
19	Drainage	2.66	1.048	2.4	1.041	2.81	1.091	10.137***	2 < 1 , 3
20	Sewage System	2.62	1.126	2.3	1.115	2.92	1.139	19.948***	2 < 1 < 3
21	Public Lighting	3.48	0.953	3.6	0.883	3.39	0.927	3.808*	3 < 2
22	Parks and Green Areas	3.17	1.076	3	1.065	3.38	1.04	10.166***	1 , 2 < 3
23	Roads	2.63	1.054	2.41	1.069	2.56	1.035	4.031*	2 < 1
24	Public Road Transport (number and frequency of bus lines)	2.86	1.054	1.86	0.914	2.73	1.074	89.841***	2 < 1 , 3
25	Catamaran	2.49	1.28	1.86	1.287	3.38	1.174	29.824***	
26	Telephone Network Coverage	4.1	0.824	4.26	0.678	4.11	0.734	4.458*	1 < 3
27	GSM Network Coverage	3.87	0.957	3.93	0.843	4.01	0.808	2.271	
28	Health Care – General Practice	3.58	0.975	3.52	0.971	3.43	0.988	2.355	
29	Dentist Offices	3.43	0.921	3.5	1.044	3.47	0.948	0.522	
30	Specialised Clinics	2.79	1.129	2.53	1.24	2.34	1.053	9.209***	3 < 1
31	Pharmacies	4	0.869	4.03	0.824	4.04	0.833	0.221	
32	Research Library	3.84	1.055	3.56	1.045	3.32	1.134	17.032***	2 . 3 < 1
33	Public Library	3.88	1.048	3.47	1.116	3.34	1.136	18.15***	2 , 3 < 1
34	Bookshops	3.16	1.083	2.93	1.153	2.55	1.135	15.308***	3 < 1 , 2
35	Sports and Recreational Facilities	2.82	1.134	2.69	1.071	2.45	0.923	10.347***	3 < 1 , 2
36	Local Committee	2.95	1.032	2.8	1.196	2.96	0.963	1.865	
37	Church	3.73	0.935	3.75	0.913	3.66	0.993	0.896	

38	Coffee Shops	3.53	0.933	3.09	1.04	3.38	0.906	19.801***	2 < 1 , 3
39	Restaurants	3.29	1.029	2.88	1.268	3.49	0.801	25.354***	2 < 1 < 3
40	Homes for the Aged	2.45	1.087	2.6	1.193	3.08	1.207	16.22***	3 > 1 , 2
41	Welfare Institutions	2.78	1.044	2.72	1.053	2.85	1.063	0.778	
42	Police Department	2.92	1.086	3.23	1.021	3.03	0.978	5.497**	1 < 2
43	General Living Conditions	3.35	0.812	2.77	0.916	3.25	0.819	47.253***	2 < 1 , 3

Source: Authors' calculations.

The Littoral respondents differ from the respondents from the Islands and Gorski Kotar in the average values of the following variables: Water-Supply System, Specialised Shops, Research Libraries and Public Libraries, in which a higher degree of satisfaction is displayed.

All three sub-regions differ in three variables: Gas-Supply System, Sewage System, and Restaurants. In average, the least satisfied are the representatives of Gorski Kotar, followed by the Littoral and the Islands. No differences among the groups were detected in the other variables. As we can see from this analysis, the first hypothesis has been confirmed.

5.2 QOL Rating and QOL Improvement Measures for Socially Vulnerable Groups

The second series of items relates to QOL rating and QOL improvement measures for socially vulnerable groups. Variance analysis indicates a number of significant differences among the sub-regions (Table 3).

In comparison to the Islands and the Littoral, the Gorski Kotar respondents agree more strongly with the following items: "the steadily aging population has growing health-related requirements" and "senior citizens lack clubs and other facilities where they can socialise." They also have different opinions regarding the QOL of young people: they agree with the item "the general outlook for young people in the future does not seem promising," and they disagree with the item "there are job opportunities for young people in the LSU." There is also a significant statistical difference relative to the other two groups concerning the need to "establish various additional educational programmes within secondary schools to provide young people with the education they desire."

Table 3 **Frequency Distribution**

		1+2[13]	3	4+5	μ	SD
1	Various additional educational programmes should be established within secondary schools to provide young people with the education they desire.	4.3	15.0	80.7	4.01	0.805
2	The steadily aging population of the LSU has growing health-related requirements.	7.9	13.1	79.0	4.05	0.948
3	Senior citizens lack clubs and other places where they can socialise.	11.4	10.2	78.5	3.94	1.009
4	There is an obvious lack of places where young people can enjoy themselves in a creative way.	17.3	7.1	75.6	3.86	1.235
5	In general, the outlook for young people in the future does not seem promising.	16.2	13.5	70.3	3.74	1.063
6	In coffee shops and discotheques, alcoholic beverages are served and sold to minors.	12.8	18.7	68.5	3.85	1.159
7	There is a lack of extra-institutional forms of social care for the elderly and the infirm; this in particular relates to assistance and care provided in the home.	14.7	21.3	64.1	3.66	1.006
8	Increasingly, young people are leaving the LSU because they see no future there.	17.1	21.9	61.1	3.63	1.062
9	In recent years, substance abuse among young people in the LSU has grown considerably.	11.2	30.2	58.6	3.64	0.963
10	Young people consume alcoholic beverages in front of stores.	25.9	23.6	50.5	3.35	1.161
11	Alcohol and substance abuse has been observed in school playgrounds at night.	15.7	34.3	50.0	3.46	1.062
12	There is a disturbing presence of vandalism in schools and other public areas.	27.9	25.7	46.5	3.27	1.111
13	Increasingly, young people are showing less interest in the programmes provided by local secondary schools.	17.3	37.3	45.4	3.34	0.993
14	Alcoholism is increasingly rife in the family environment.	21.3	38.9	39.8	3.24	0.959
15	The Roma have all the conditions necessary for a pleasant life in the LSU.	22.5	45.2	32.3	3.12	1.029
16	Schools provide children with adequate information on hazardous behaviour (addiction, sexual activities…).	31.5	36.9	31.6	2.98	1.023
17	Violent behaviour is present in the streets.	45.8	28.2	26	2.78	1.038
18	Vagrants and homeless people can often be seen in the streets.	56.2	20.9	23	2.55	1.112
19	The work of the non-government sector is strongly supported by local authorities.	33.5	45.1	21.4	2.81	0.987
20	Appropriate care is provided for elderly and infirm persons.	55.2	26.7	18	2.49	1.025
21	Most of the population make a decent living.	63.9	19.4	16.8	2.31	1.052
22	There is a sufficient number of extra-curricular activities to meet the interests of secondary-school students.	56.7	27.5	15.8	2.39	1.039
23	The work of the non-government sector is clearly visible and transparent to all citizens, and it enjoys strong public support.	46.2	38.1	15.6	2.58	0.996
24	The ban on selling cigarettes and alcoholic beverages to children and minors is strictly respected.	66.4	22.8	10.8	2.18	1.024
25	People with special needs are appropriately involved in social life.	58.3	32.2	9.4	2.35	0.921
26	Addiction problems (alcoholism, drug addiction) are successfully prevented and resolved.	63.6	28	8.3	2.25	0.917
27	The problem of unemployment is being successfully resolved.	76.5	16.4	7.1	1.96	0.947
28	In the LSU, there are job opportunities available for young people after schooling.	75.6	17.6	6.7	1.95	0.919

Source: Authors' calculations.

[13] *Frequencies are expressed in percentages on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree),* **μ** *= arithmetical mean, SD = standard deviation.*

On the other hand, the adverse aspects of development are reflected in the dependency level of the population. In comparison to Gorski Kotar, the representatives of the Littoral and the Islands agree more strongly with the following items: "alcohol and substance abuse has been observed in school playgrounds" and "in recent years, substance abuse among young people has grown considerably." Similarly, they agree less with the item "schools provide children with adequate information on hazardous behaviour (addiction, sexual activities...)" in comparison with Gorski Kotar. In comparison to the Littoral, Gorski Kotar representatives show a higher degree of agreement with the item "addiction problems (alcoholism, drug addiction) are successfully prevented and resolved," but a lower degree of agreement with "young people consume alcoholic beverages in front of stores." In relation to the Littoral and Gorski Kotar, the degree of agreement with the item "alcoholism is increasingly rife in the family environment" is considerably higher in the Islands group.

All three groups differ with regard to the following items: "young people are leaving the LSU because they see no future there," the Gorski Kotar group shows the highest degree of agreement ($\mu = 4.21$), followed by the Islands group ($\mu = 3.59$), with the lowest degree of agreement displayed by the Littoral group ($\mu = 3.30$). Whereas the Littorals ($\mu = 3.55$) agree "there is a disturbing presence of vandalism in schools and other public areas," the Islanders agree less ($\mu = 3.24$), and the Highlanders the least ($\mu = 2.84$). Although all three groups do not agree with the item "the problem of unemployment is being successfully resolved," statistically significant differences are apparent: Highlanders show the lowest degree of agreement ($\mu = 1.85$), followed by Islanders ($\mu = 2.0$), and Littorals ($\mu = 2.01$).

The other dimension analysed relates to the perceived need of initiating a line of potential measures to improve the position of socially vulnerable groups, the young and the elderly. On a Likert-based scale, respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement with the items listed. Between 75 and 100 percent of all the respondents accepted 24 measures, out of a total of 26 measures proposed. Generally speaking, there are no differences among the sub-regions relative to average responses, with the exception of four variables. This indicates that, across the entire County, there is a common stand regarding the perceived existence of the numerous requirements of socially vulnerable groups.

In general, respondents think that all the segments in the LSU must begin to cooperate more efficiently if population QOL is to improve (95.7 percent), and that systematic and continuous care should focus on "healthy families" (94.8 percent). This shows that the local communities realise the need for mutual cooperation, as well as the need for social solidarity in adequately addressing the relevant issues. On the other hand, it can also be interpreted as the perception that it is possible to resolve most of the problems through cooperation within the local community. Importance is also given to the activities of the civil sector: 84.5 percent of respondents consider it is essential to encourage NGO programmes contributing to the improvement of QOL in the LSU, and to put in place a number of activities to help people with special needs participate more actively in all segments of the local community (90 percent).

Measures to improve the QOL of young people are reflected in the following activities. About 89.3 percent of respondents agree on the necessity of creating a professional team within the school system, comprising a speech pathologist, therapist, pedagogue, and psychologist. Neglected clubhouses should be used to serve the needs of the social community and social activities (94.8 percent). A multipurpose facility (for sports, games, entertainment, learning, use of the Internet) should be constructed (or made available) for young people (93.5 percent), and various types of leisure programmes should be provided for children and young people (95.7 percent). A youth and family guidance centre needs to be established in the LSU (84.3 percent). Also, forums and educational gatherings should be continuously organised to enable children, young people and families to learn more about family planning, character development, growing up, hazardous behaviour, and so on (89.3 percent). Failure to appropriately meet a number of the needs of young people is thus obvious, making it necessary to include the listed measures into development plans.

A range of measures is needed to improve the QOL of the elderly and the infirm. Occasional specialist check-ups should be organised (95.9 percent), and medicine and orthopaedic aids should be provided free-of-charge or at reduced prices (93.2 percent). Stocking up in cooked food, groceries, gas, firewood, etc. should be made easier for the elderly (93.3 percent). The services of a community-health nurse for the elderly and infirm should be provided and expanded, especially in small villages (94.2 percent). Senior citizens should also be provided with free-of-charge home care and assistance (90.8 percent). Aid groups should be developed in the LSU to provide safe and fast help in crises (90 percent). Social events and entertainment (cinema, theatre,

reading rooms) should be organised for elderly people (94.8 percent), and homes for the aged should be more readily available and less costly (95.8 percent). Retired people should receive financial aid at Christmas time and Easter (89 percent), and they should have access to free transportation (82.7 percent). As there are no differences among the average responses of the sub-region representatives to these items, it is obvious that the existing system fails to adequately meet the needs of the elderly. While Bežovan (2000) reports that government welfare programmes are inefficient, non-innovative and bogged in red tape, recent studies indicate that non-profit organisations in advanced countries are playing an increasingly important role in providing social services in cooperation with LSUs. As such, they are more attuned to beneficiaries (personalised). The beginning of a trend that focuses on providing assistance in the home, instead of placing the elderly in institutions, is evident (Bežovan, 2000). Such a trend is also discernible within the CPGK territory, where homes for the aged cannot accommodate the growing demand, and increasing support is provided for home-assistance programmes. Current changes in developing combined social policies (Evers, 1991, according to Bežovan, 2000) are simultaneously perceived as essential and desirable. In our survey, we asked how desirable the social services (food, conversation, care) rendered by non-profit organisations were perceived to be. The results of chi-square tests revealed no differences in the opinions of respondents regardless of the sub-region they belong to. About two-thirds of the respondents perceive such services to be highly desirable, which leads us to conclude that a broader social community supports and perceives the need of social services rendered by NGOs. The remaining 23 percent of respondents see these services as being partially desirable, which suggests that this segment cannot sufficiently cover all the needs arising in the local community. Earlier studies (Coury, 1998, cited by Bežovan, 2000) have indicated that the role played by the non-profit sector should be a complementary one, with Welfare Centres and LSUs acting as the coordinators of all programmes.

Respondents also underlined the need for LSUs to develop loan programmes and employment programmes for groups with difficulties in finding jobs (young people, women) (91.6 percent). LSUs should also help citizens, who are poor and at risk, to find a housing solution (82.1 percent) and should provide them with greater financial assistance (83.1 percent). Only 61.4 percent of respondents feel that the needy should be able to buy food at lower prices in certain shops. The only item that the least number of respondents agreed with refers to the alignment of working hours of day-care centres and schools with the working hours of parents: one half of the

respondents expressed disagreement with this item, indicating the need to adjust day-care centre working hours to the working hours of parents.

The above analysis both supports and rejects parts of our second hypothesis, because, as we can see, ratings differ based on sub-regional division; however, regarding QOL improvement measures, the respondents were almost unanimous. The high degree of agreement with a range of proposed measures suggests that there are no appropriate means of meeting so many needs of various socially vulnerable groups, which are identical across the County.

5.3 Economic Activities

The next dimension analysed relates to how the representatives of local communities perceive efforts and investments made to promote a range of economic activities. As expected, differences in responses were detected in a number of variables, partly resulting from the spatial positions of the sub-regions, as well as from other factors. As Table 4 (chi-square test analysis) clearly indicates, the responses of Gorski Kotar representatives strongly differ from those of the other two sub-regions. They express the opinion that insufficient efforts have been made in a number of activities. The highest percentage relates to Agriculture; 82.2 percent of respondents think the efforts made up to date have been insufficient. This is followed by Handicrafts (79.3 percent), Animal Husbandry (74.2 percent), Farming (73.8 percent), Industries (in general) (72.9 percent), Gardening and Fruit-Growing (71.6 percent), Transportation (70 percent), Other Service Activities (69.9 percent), Manufacturing Industries (68.3 percent), Sheep-Farming (63.4 percent), Hospitality (60.6 percent), Gas Supply (60 percent), and Metal-processing Industries (54.7 percent). With the exception of Industries (in general), most of the above activities are characteristic of rural areas, which leads to the conclusion that these activities are dying out. In the opinion of respondents, traditional activities need to be revitalised. Also, the need to develop the transport system points to the isolation of certain areas, a characteristic of rural regions whose development depends upon the infrastructure and, in particular, the transportation infrastructure, which enables a part of the population's social needs to be met by travelling to larger towns. There is an apparent lack of hospitality facilities and other service activities that are a precondition to developing rural tourism. Representatives from Gorski Kotar (71.8 percent), as well as from the Littoral (70.4 percent), agree that investments in Tourism are insufficient.

Table 4 **Chi-Square – Perceived Investment in Economic Activities**

		Insufficient	Sufficient (as required)	Excessive (more than necessary)	No opinion	
Tourism	Littoral	70.4	24.2	1.6	3.8	Chi-square 37.087 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	71.8	23.3	2.6	2.3	
	Islands	55.7	41.0	1.5	1.8	
Hospitality	Littoral	41.5	48.7	4.6	5.2	Chi-square 44.805 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	60.6	33.9	2.6	2.9	
	Islands	35.8	54.8	3.9	5.4	
Agriculture	Littoral	71.8	15.1	0.6	12.5	Chi-square 29.892 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	82.2	13.2	1.0	3.6	
	Islands	68.4	20.2	2.1	9.3	
Fishing Industry	Littoral	47.1	17.5	0.5	34.9	Chi-square 116.77 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	33.7	10.1	0.5	55.8	
	Islands	55.7	28.6	2.4	13.3	
Shipping Industry	Littoral	33.8	20.8	1.2	44.1	Chi-square 144.37 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	15.6	4.80	1.2	78.4	
	Islands	46.2	30.3	0.6	22.9	
Transport	Littoral	63.2	31.4	1.3	4.2	Chi-square 27.16 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	70.0	19.3	1.8	8.9	
	Islands	55.8	36.3	1.5	6.4	
Handicrafts	Littoral	66.8	26.2	0.6	6.4	Chi-square 22.58 df = 6 p < 0.001
	Gorski Kotar	79.3	14.9	1.0	4.7	
	Islands	65.5	23.8	0.9	9.8	
Other Service Activities	Littoral	56.4	34.9	0.6	8.0	Chi-square 31.92 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	69.9	19.6	1.4	9.1	
	Islands	52.0	34.2	0.6	13.2	
Trade	Littoral	27.8	62.0	7.1	3.0	Chi-square 14.66 df = 6 p < 0.05 (0.023)
	Gorski Kotar	35.9	56.8	3.0	4.3	
	Islands	29.3	61.2	5.7	3.7	
Education	Littoral	46.1	49.3	0.6	4.0	
	Gorski Kotar	46.9	48.5	1.7	3.0	
	Islands	45.9	48.3	0.6	5.1	
Culture	Littoral	57.4	36.5	3.2	2.8	
	Gorski Kotar	60.9	33.1	2.3	3.6	
	Islands	65.2	30.9	0.9	3.0	
Sports	Littoral	50.7	40.2	7.3	1.8	Chi-square 16.09 df = 6 p < 0.05
	Gorski Kotar	47.8	43.5	6.6	2.0	
	Islands	58.7	34.3	3.3	3.6	
Health Care and Welfare	Littoral	49.6	44.4	1.4	4.6	
	Gorski Kotar	57.1	38.2	1.3	3.3	
	Islands	52.4	41.5	0.9	5.2	
Science	Littoral	74.0	12.8	0.2	13.0	
	Gorski Kotar	71.6	10.3	0.7	17.4	
	Islands	72.4	10.1	0.6	16.9	
Farming	Littoral	57.7	13.1	0.4	28.8	Chi-square 33.96 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	73.8	10.1	0.3	15.7	
	Islands	59.2	19.9	0.6	20.2	
Animal Husbandry	Littoral	58.1	13.0	0.2	28.7	Chi-square 103.45 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	74.2	14.8	1.0	10.1	
	Islands	48.3	33.6	1.5	16.5	

Gardening and Fruit-Growing	Littoral	58.2	23.3	0.2	18.3	Chi-square 17.08 df = 6 p < 0.01
	Gorski Kotar	71.6	16.1	0.3	12.0	
	Islands	61.0	20.4	0.9	17.6	
Shipbuilding	Littoral	25.6	19.4	2.7	52.2	Chi-square 118.69 df = 6 p < 0.01
	Gorski Kotar	17.7	7.2	0.0	75.1	
	Islands	39.2	31.8	1.5	27.5	
Water Supply	Littoral	25.5	59.8	2.5	12.2	Chi-square 19.68 df = 6 p < 0.01
	Gorski Kotar	35.9	52.8	3.2	8.1	
	Islands	27.3	63.5	3.4	5.8	
Electric Power Supply	Littoral	12.2	74.1	1.9	11.8	
	Gorski Kotar	14.3	74.2	2.8	8.7	
	Islands	13.4	77.3	2.5	6.8	
Gas Supply	Littoral	56.7	16.5	0.7	26.2	Chi-square 28.75 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	60.0	5.7	0.0	34.3	
	Islands	53.4	20.7	0.6	25.2	
Renewable Energy Sources	Littoral	55.6	9.7	0.0	34.7	
	Gorski Kotar	58.4	7.8	0.8	33.1	
	Islands	60.7	10.9	0.0	28.4	
Marine Farming	Littoral	46.1	9.8	0.2	43.8	Chi-square 67.27 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	32.4	5.7	1.0	61.0	
	Islands	54.8	17.3	1.0	26.9	
Metal-Processing Industry	Littoral	31.5	20.4	2.0	46.1	Chi-square 50.48 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	54.7	15.4	0.4	29.5	
	Islands	36.5	11.5	2.3	49.7	
Oil Industry	Littoral	14.6	13.6	8.8	63.0	Chi-square 26.85 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	19.5	9.2	0.0	71.3	
	Islands	20.5	14.1	8.1	57.2	
Sheep-Farming	Littoral	46.9	12.3	0.7	40.1	Chi-square 219.75 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	63.4	11.5	1.4	23.7	
	Islands	39.4	47.4	3.7	9.5	
Manufacturing Industry	Littoral	41.2	15,2	1.8	41.8	Chi-square 67.59 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	68.3	12.7	0.7	18.3	
	Islands	40.9	12.2	2.6	44.2	
Forestry	Littoral	39.6	29.5	2.4	28.6	Chi-square 117.97 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	27.8	58.0	7.5	6.8	
	Islands	39.4	30.7	1.2	28.6	
Hunting	Littoral	17.9	49.8	9.8	22.4	Chi-square 28.65 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	18.9	58.5	12.1	10.6	
	Islands	20.1	45.7	17.7	16.5	
Wine-Growing	Littoral	53.1	24.1	0.9	21.9	Chi-square 186.58 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	27.9	6.3	1.4	64.4	
	Islands	53.5	30.3	2.4	13.8	
Olive-Growing	Littoral	56.7	10.5	0.2	32.6	Chi-square 442.47 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	18.0	2.6	0.0	79.4	
	Islands	41.1	51.8	2.1	4.9	
Industries, in General	Littoral	39.4	20.8	6.6	33.3	Chi-square 106.70 df = 6 p = 0.000
	Gorski Kotar	72.9	13.0	1.1	13.0	
	Islands	35.5	20.4	7.6	36.5	
Rock and Ore Extraction	Littoral	21.0	14.5	8.0	56.5	Chi-square 14.56 df = 6 p < 0.05
	Gorski Kotar	25.1	14.2	5.2	55.5	
	Islands	21.9	15.1	13.8	21.9	

Source: Authors' calculations.

The Littorals also feel that up to date insufficient investments have been made in Agriculture (71.8 percent), Transportation (66 percent), Olive-Growing (56.7 percent), Wine-Growing (53.1 percent), and even Sheep-Farming (47 percent). The Islanders consider that insufficient investments have been made in Agriculture (68.4 percent), Handicrafts (65.5 percent), Gardening and Fruit-Growing (61 percent), Farming (59.2 percent), Sports (58.7 percent), Transportation (55.8 percent), the Fishing Industry (55.7 percent), Marine Farming (54.8 percent), Wine-Growing (53.5 percent), and Olive-Growing (41.1 percent).

The less popular activities include Rock and Ore Extraction and the Oil Industry, as well as Trade, in which more than 50 percent of representatives think sufficient investments have been made.

Interestingly, there are no differences in the frequency of responses regarding activities that are part of the social superstructure, such as education, culture, health care, welfare and science, although the opinions expressed are highly polarised. While half feel that sufficient investments have been made in education, the other half thinks that not enough has been invested. Similarly, 50-60 percent of representatives claim that insufficient investments have been made in culture, while about a third disagree; 50-58 percent agree that insufficient investments have been made in health care and welfare, while 38-45 percent share the opposite opinion. Also, almost 70 percent of representatives agree that the investments made in science have been insufficient. In almost all of the listed variables, however, the percentage of respondents perceiving investments as insufficient is very high, ranging from 40 to 80 percent, whereas an exceptionally small percentage (between 1 and 8 percent) perceive previous investments as being excessive.

The analysis suggests that Gorski Kotar is "the most vulnerable" region in the County, requiring well-thought-out and rational planning to contribute to revitalising the integral life of this area.

5.4 Perceived Concern over Environmental Issues

As environmental quality is a crucial component of QOL, and because special attention is attached to environmental impact studies in planning development, one of the survey dimensions focuses on the perception of disturbing environmental

issues. On a 5-point scale, the respondents were asked to rate their degree of concern over 19 environmental issues.[14] When summing the values of the variables "strongly concerned" and "very strongly concerned", the following distribution of responses is obtained. Respondents are most concerned with Marine Pollution (48.1 percent) and the Discharge of Untreated Wastewater (47.6 percent) - no differences among the sub-regions were found for these two variables – as well as with the Increase of Unlicensed Dumps (47.4 percent), Devastation of Woodlands (46.1 percent), and Potable Water Pollution (48.1 percent).

On average, the respondents are least concerned with the Risk of Industrial Accidents ($\mu = 2.38$), Soil Erosion ($\mu = 2.65$), Air Pollution ($\mu = 2.67$) and Hazardous Waste ($\mu = 2.69$). Only a surprisingly small percentage of respondents, however, see certain issues as reasons for concern: the percentage of representatives who perceive environmental issues as potentially concerning is not even 50 percent in a total of five variables, and in other variables, this percentage is even lower. On the other hand, between a quarter and a third of all the respondents rated the listed issues as reason for moderate concern.

Variance analysis[15] shows that statistically significant differences among the sub-regions exist for a total of 14 variables. Differences among all three groups exist for four variables: the representatives of the Littoral are most concerned with Air Pollution and Traffic Growth; the representatives of Gorski Kotar are less concerned, whereas the Islanders are the least concerned. Again, the Littorals perceive the Increase of Noise Pollution and the Reduction of Green Areas in the LSU as most concerning, the Islanders as less concerning, and the Gorski Kotar representatives as least concerning. In comparison to the Gorski Kotar and Islands respondents, the Littorals, on average, more strongly perceive Hazardous Waste and the Increase of Unlicensed Dumps as disturbing environmental issues, whereas, unlike the Gorski Kotar representatives, the Littoral perceive the Risk of Industrial Accidents as an issue of concern. The representatives of the Islands are statistically more concerned with the Depletion of Natural Resources and Potable Water Pollution than the other two sub-regions.

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[14] *On a 5-point scale with 1 = very mildy concerned, 5 = very strongly concerned.*

[15] *Variance analysis, together with appropriate post-hoc tests (Scheffe Test for homogenous and Tamhane T2 for non-homogenous variances), was used to test the statistical significance of average group results; all tests were conducted at a significance level of 5 percent.*

Table 5 **Variance Analysis: Perceived Concern over Environmental Issues**										
		1 Littoral		**2 Gorski Kotar**		**3 Island**		**F**	**Differences among groups**	**Rank**
		μ	**SD**	***μ***	**SD**	***μ***	**SD**			
1	Marine Pollution	3.44	1.276	3.16	1.495	3.3	1.196	2.61		1
2	Discharging Untreated Wastewater	3.42	1.275	3.34	1.239	3.23	1.209	2.216		2
3	Increase of Unlicensed Dumps	3.62	1.203	3.19	1.227	3.13	1.178	20.363***	1 > 2, 3	3
4	Devastation of Woodlands	3.3	1.206	3.83	1.139	2.8	1.198	58.365***	2 > 1 , 3	4
5	Potable Water Pollution	3.04	1.304	3.39	1.258	3.12	1.224	7.306**	3 > 1 , 2	5
6	Traffic Growth	3.48	1.137	2.65	1.153	3.26	1.129	49.711***	1 > 2 > 3	6
7	Reduction of Farmland Caused by Construction	3.31	1.344	2.52	1.201	3.34	1.285	42.04***	1, 3 > 2	7
8	Municipal Waste Management	3.37	1.175	3.19	1.112	2.87	1.145	18.235***	1 , 2 > 3	8
9	Decrease of Green Areas in the Town/Municipality	3.34	1.248	2.53	1.255	3.07	1.272	37.446***	1 >3 > 2	9
10	Soil Pollution	3.11	1.227	3.32	1.169	2.83	1.16	12.993***	1 , 2 > 3	10
11	River Water Pollution	2.79	1.392	3.37	1.218	2.38	1.398	35.264***	2 > 1 > 3	11
12	Increasing Noise Pollution	3.26	1.193	2.47	1.131	3.01	1.194	42.395***	1 >3 > 2	12
13	Farmland Pollution	3	1.174	3.25	1.106	2.76	1.127	14.058***	3 > 1 > 2	13
14	Depletion of Natural Resources	2.8	1.231	3.16	1.322	2.66	1.219	12,931***	3 > 1 , 2	14
15	Hazardous Waste	2.9	1.344	2.54	1.144	2.5	1.172	12.935***	1 > 2, 3	15
16	Food Pollution	2.94	1.263	3.04	1.174	2.78	1.145	3.677*	2 > 1	16
17	Soil Erosion	2.74	1.291	2.61	1.198	2.55	1.159	2.547		17
18	Air Pollution	3.07	1.286	2.58	1.166	2.17	1.022	59.219***	1 > 2 > 3	18
19	Risk of Industrial Accidents	2.5	1.339	2.2	1.108	2.36	1.396	4.787*	1 > 2	19

Source: Authors' calculations.

The Littorals and Islanders are more concerned with the Reduction of Farmland Caused by Construction than the Gorski Kotar respondents. The Gorski Kotar representatives are more concerned with River Water Pollution than the Littorals; the Islanders are the least concerned with this issue. Gorski Kotar respondents are also more concerned with Food Pollution than the Littorals. There is a statistically significant difference in the high degree of concern the Highlanders express regarding the Devastation of Woodlands, relative to the other two groups. We can conclude that development has had an adverse impact on the environment of the Littoral, whose representatives show a higher degree of concern with a number of potential environmental issues in comparison with the other two groups. The analysis indicates that Gorski Kotar representatives perceive as disturbing forest- and water-related issues, i.e. Water Pollution and the Devastation of Woodlands. Hence, in

planning future guidelines, attention should be focused on the rational and sustainable use of forests and water. The natural resources of the Littoral and the Islands, in particular, the sea and the air, are also considered potentially endangered areas in terms of ecology, making it necessary to reduce the pressures of development, especially in the Littoral region. On the Islands, the excessive construction of houses for holiday purposes is obviously a cause for concern over the depletion of natural resources and the loss of farmland. Since this construction has not been matched by the construction of appropriate infrastructure, there is also concern over the potential pollution of potable water. The above analysis, therefore, supports our final hypothesis.

6 Closing Remarks

The results of this research will hopefully be used as a basis for the future planning of sustainable development. Unsustained growth is an issue evident throughout Croatia, and, as such, it is not specific to the County of Primorje and Gorski Kotar. For the purpose of this paper, we have divided the CPGK into three sub-regions, although urther sub-division on the micro region level is also possible (see Banovac et al., 2004). In overall reporting, the data have been analysed and presented on the LSU level to provide each LSU with information it can use in the planning process; the analysis results on a sub-regional level are intended to help the County in planning future policies.

Building a more consistent social framework is not possible without reconstructing basic social consensus. Social consensus (including the promotion of fundamental social solidarity) is a precondition to a well-thought-out and coordinated economic and social development (Zrinščak, 2000). We believe this research has provided insight into social consensus that exists and is manifested at two levels. Althrough a number of disparities have emerged, the group representatives have expressed a unanimous opinion regarding measures targeting QOL improvement of socially vulnerable groups. These measures should be put in place as soon as possible to help revitalise life in jeopardised regions. From the viewpoint of the integrated sustainable development of the County (CPGK Spatial Plan, 2000, based on Chapter 14 of Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity), the County should completely discard the development of conventional agriculture, and, instead, should plan and promote the development of ecological agriculture. Our research partially

confirms this stance: group representatives are aware of the importance of revitalising agriculture and a range of other activities characteristic of agro-environmental regions (animal husbandry, farming, horticulture, apiculture, sheep-farming, wine-growing, and many other) to foster the development of rural tourism throughout the County and, in particular, in Gorski Kotar and the Islands region. According to the group representatives, another area in which insufficient investments have been made is science, meaning that it is perceived as marginal. Researchers studying the "knowledge industry" have also concluded that the sciences hold a marginal position in the Croatian society (Županov, 2003). It is obvious, nevertheless, that the group representatives perceive the need to invest in developing science. Investing in science, means investing in knowledge, education and teaching, as strategic resources. This can serve as a basis for successful development, examples of which we have seen in other small European states. Due to its profound contribution to better planning, designing, implementing and testing of policy decisions in the industries and economy, in crisis management, the defence system, environmental protection, welfare, etc., fostering the development of science is a precondition (Simonić, 2003: 87) to sustainable development.

In our opinion, it is exceptionally important to create prerequisites to sustained growth throughout the County, because no integrated programme of legal and other changes, which could bring about such an outcome, has been put forward. Accordingly, the new concept of regional development should also contain a range of measures involving government incentives for new production investments in Croatia's underdeveloped regions, decentralisation of funds for (other) public services (health care, elementary and secondary schooling), equal distribution of tax income from public enterprises (INA, HEP...), dislocating certain central government bodies from Zagreb (Malenica, 2006), as well as a range of other preconditions reflected in the following: the State must formulate a development strategy and define legal commitments, promote incentive measures, make changes to the system of funding local and regional self-government, pass greater responsibilities and rights down to the regions (Counties), and obligate the regions (Counties) to employ their own measures in carrying out national, and through this, regional strategies of sustainable development.

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