

## **New Cultural Tourists in a Southeastern European City: The Case of Split**

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This article is based on selected results of an empirical survey of the tourists visiting the historical core of the city of Split (Croatia), carried out in the summer of 2005. Its aim is to serve as a stepping stone for a future, more detailed analysis of the profile of “new” cultural tourists visiting this particular and other comparable Southeastern European locations. The attractions that the city of Split has to offer can be considered to be indicative of the interests of a new type of tourist visiting the region. Therefore, the results of the survey, as well as our observations made in its course, should be generalizable to a degree, or at least considered to be useful in a wider context.

In essence, the article can be said to contain the elements for a definition of the profile of the “new” cultural tourists visiting the Southeastern European region. It is based on the results of the survey we have carried out, discussed in the context of views expressed in recent approaches to the study of cultural tourism. The article also contains information on the context in which the survey originated. Starting from the concrete example of Split, its final section presents an overview of the issues that arise in a policy discussion centering on the connection between tourism and the creative industries.

### **The context of research: creative cities, tourism, policy issues**

The empirical survey of the tourists visiting the historic core of the city of Split was carried out as part of the UK SEE Forum, a two-year (2004-2006) British Council-funded program, one strand of which was devoted to the “creative industries”. The goal of the program was to take expertise in economic data collection (“mapping”) “from a UK region to a transitional economy” and also to “explore [...]

the infrastructure needs and barriers to development facing the creative industries” (British Council, 2005).<sup>1</sup>

Within the overall framework of the “creative city” agenda, each individual participating Southeastern European city implemented a self-defined project. Some opted for awareness-raising events, some for networking efforts, some for mapping, and some for a strategy based on a combination of all these elements.<sup>2</sup> The team from the Croatian city of Split opted for a mapping exercise, trying to establish the grounds for the implementation of policies aimed at the development of creative industries, based on the available cultural resources of the city.

The question that needed to be answered was what approach to mapping should be taken, as well as what specific measures within it. Based on preliminary research, it was judged that the economic activity based on the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sports’ (DCMS) definition of creative industries was not of the size and intensity that would warrant mapping conceived of as hard economic data collection.<sup>3</sup> Instead, an approach was taken that was closer to what is known as an “audit of cultural resources”.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 In a wider context, this particular program was part of the British Council’s “creative industries in transitional markets” focus, aimed at economies which have “moved beyond the development stage but [were] still unable to protect intellectual property rights in creative goods and services”. Within this framework, the pilot project for Latin America was developed in Colombia. The Baltic states were the first among the post-socialist countries to join the program in 2003, and the year 2004 saw its extension to the Southeastern European region. The program is now being extended to India and China.
- 2 Southeastern European participating in the project included Belgrade/Novi Sad (Serbia), Iasi (Romania), Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Podgorica (Montenegro), Prishtina (Kosovo), Skopje (Macedonia), Split (Croatia), Tirana (Albania), and Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- 3 The definition of the creative industries that the planned research departed from was the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sports one, specifying that “creative industries” include the sectors of advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer games, television and radio (DCMS, 2005). We are grateful for assistance in the preliminary research to “Puls” agency. While it would certainly be useful to perform a comprehensive survey of economic data related to creative industries production in the city of Split, it was felt that - at the present stage of development - the level of usefulness of such an action would not entirely match the financial resources needed to complete it.
- 4 Discussions led at the regional workshop on mapping methodology, organized by the Split team in June 2004 under the title “Mapping the Creative City”, helped us reach the decision on the mapping approach to be taken. We are grateful to all the participants, and especially to workshop leaders Dr. Calvin Taylor (University of Leeds) and Julie Seyler (“Creative Kernow”). Of particular usefulness to our effort was the discussion of the methodology of tourist surveys developed by Nottingham Trent University and used as part of the Cornwall mapping exercise.

In a policy context, such an approach was judged to be more appropriate as a basis for establishing a strategy that would be conducive to both urban regeneration and the development of creative industries in the city. Within this general framework, the question was on what specific area to focus the regenerating effort and the empirical research that was to provide data that could serve as its basis.

With limited resources available,<sup>5</sup> we decided to focus primarily on one aspect of the creative industries supply chain. The aspect chosen was that of consumption. Within this aspect, we decided to concentrate our efforts on the survey of tourists, who were hypothesized to be one of the most promising groups of consumers of the existing and potential creative industries production in the city.

A group that was judged to be of special importance in this sense was that composed of a new type of tourists visiting the historic core of the city of Split. Namely, our preliminary observation suggested that a significant number of the tourists visiting this heritage area were interested in local culture in a way that differed from that typical of cultural tourists visiting the city in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This group was preliminarily identified as one that could serve as the engine not only of the economic aspects of the creative industries activity but also of the cultural development of the city.

## Tourism Development Potential of Split in the Southeastern European Context

Before we present the profile and selected results of the survey we have carried out, we would like to provide a brief contextualization of the tourism development potential of the city of Split in its regional surroundings. Namely, in a wider context, the city of Split can be said to exhibit the traits that Elka Bakalova (2003) considers to be typical of the entire region she refers to as “Balkans”:<sup>6</sup> it is a crossroads of different cultures and it is characterized by a wealth of cultural monuments.

- 5 The empirical survey, as well as the entire effort focused on the development of the creative industries in Croatia in 2005, was initially funded by the British Council. In the second phase of the project, the City of Split provided matching funding, reciprocating the funds allocated specifically for the empirical survey.
- 6 For the sake of accuracy, it should be said that the city of Split, as well as Croatia as a country, is positioned at the westernmost edge of what has been known in contemporary political and journalistic discourses as “Western Balkans”. In reality, in terms of its identity but also of the geographical realities, Croatia “represents a very complex [...] instance” of a country with “double, or even triple, regional identities” (Dragojević, 2001, 17). In the case of Croatia, this identity includes Central European, Mediterranean and Balkan components. In this light, the “Balkans” designation Bakalova is using seems somewhat reductionist. We have therefore, in the title and in the text of this article, used a more neutral designation “Southeastern Europe”. Namely, in the cases of Croatia in general and the city of Split in particular, the latter accommodates both the Balkans and other designations that are present in their contemporary cultural profiles.























